

LAREDO
on the
RIO GRANDE

By KATHLEEN De CAMARA

976.4 C17L 53-42836
da Camara
Laredo on the Rio Grande
Gift

Keep Your Card in This Pocket

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for two weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on this card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



Public Library
Kansas City, Mo.



$$85 + 51 = 136$$

DATA

[illegible]

LAREDO
on the
RIO GRANDE

L A R E D O

on the

R I O G R A N D E

by

Kathleen Da Camara

Press of

THE NAYLOR COMPANY

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Copyright, 1949 by
KATHLEEN DA CAMARA

This book is dedicated
to the memory of my brothers

RANDOLPH LAURENCE DA CAMARA

HARRY SHIRLEY DA CAMARA

Foreword

In presenting this book, my objective has been to trace the history of Laredo from its founding to 1949. It is not my wish to imply that this is a complete history of the city of Laredo, but it does include some of the cultural, historic, and economic influences that have developed the city.

All of the persons to whom I have gone for information have kindly assisted me in gathering the necessary material, especially Mr. Seb Wilcox, and Sister Mary Gabriel, Sister at the Ursuline Academy.

I present this book to the people on both sides of the Rio Grande, hoping that it may be a permanent source of pleasure and international understanding.

— KATHLEEN DA CAMARA

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Section of Pictures</i>	Between xii and 1
CHAPTER	PAGE
I <i>Location, Population and Climate</i>	1
II <i>Early History of Laredo</i>	9
III <i>Later History of Laredo</i>	21
IV <i>Commercial History</i>	33
V <i>Fort McIntosh</i>	47
VI <i>History of the Churches of Laredo</i>	53
VII <i>Educational Facilities</i>	59
VIII <i>Festivals, Celebrations, Monuments, Places of Interest</i>	67
<i>Conclusion</i>	79
<i>Bibliography</i>	81
<i>Appendix</i>	87

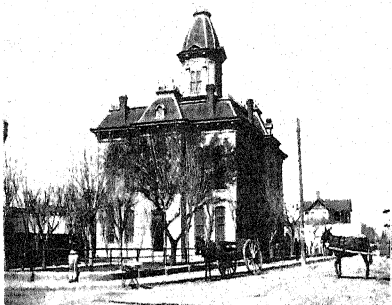
Section of Pictures



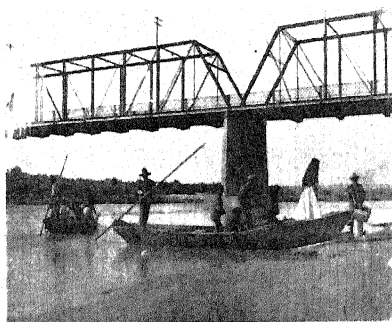
Onion train, Laredo, Texas. Early 1900's



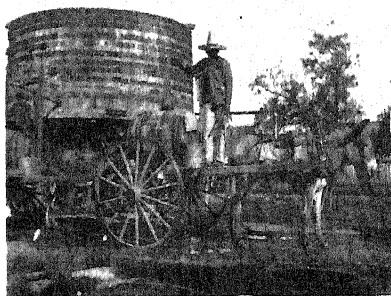
Where C.P. & L. Co. is now located



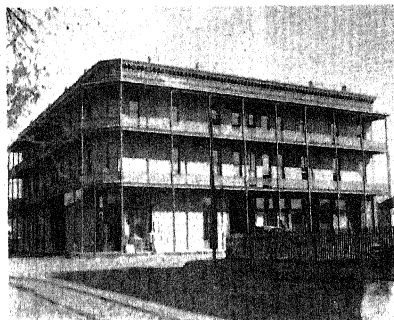
Old Courthouse



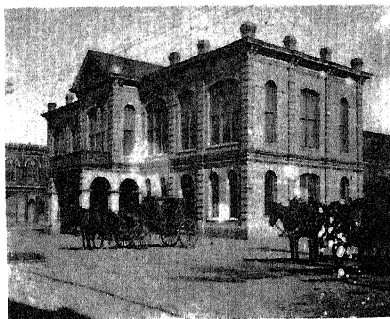
Ferry across the river



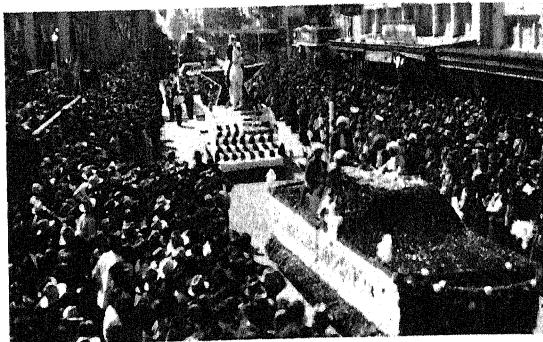
Water wagon — water was sold in Laredo by cart



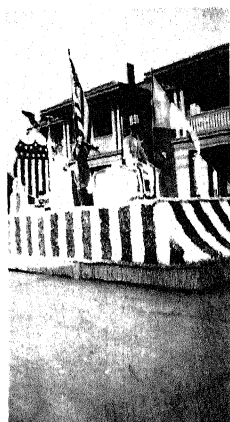
First Hamilton Hotel where present hotel is located



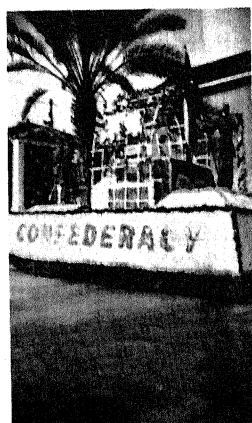
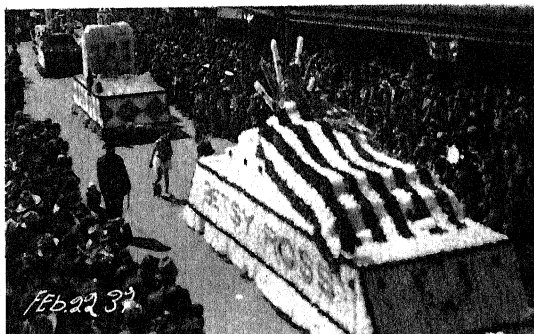
City hall — still the same

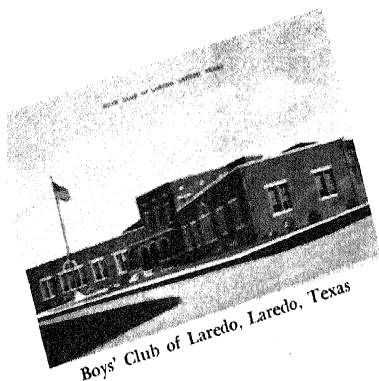


WASHINGTON
BIRTHDAY
CELEBRATIONS

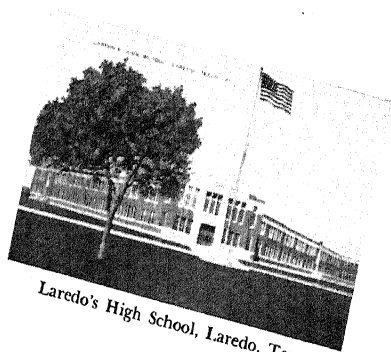


OBSERVED
ANNUALLY

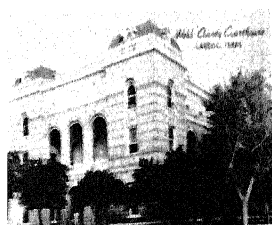




Boys' Club of Laredo, Laredo, Texas



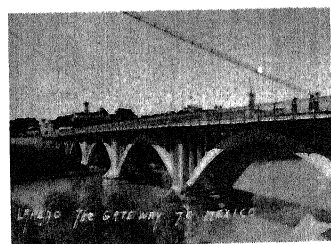
Laredo's High School, Laredo, Texas



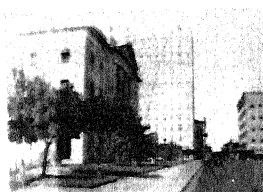
Webb County Courthouse,
Laredo, Texas



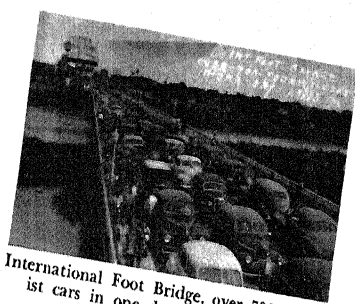
Jarvis Plaza



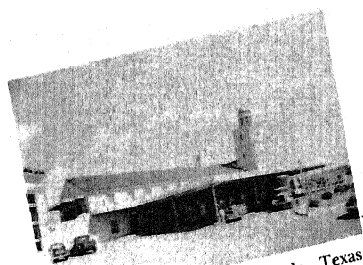
Laredo, The Gateway to Mexico



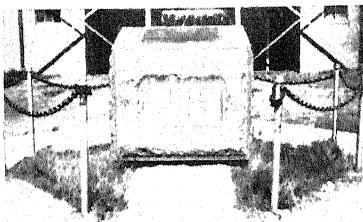
Postoffice and Hamilton Hotel



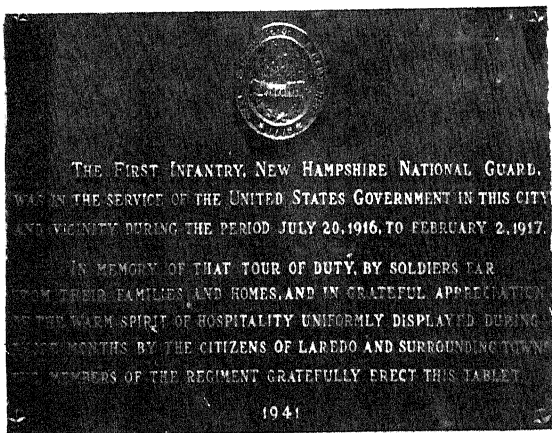
International Foot Bridge, over 700 tourist cars in one day, Laredo, Texas



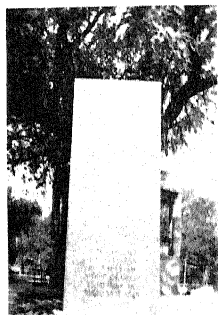
U. S. Customs Building — Laredo, Texas



Monument at Martin High Stadium dedicated to Late Shirley Da Camara



Plaque on Bandstand Jarvis Plaza



Tomas Sanchez Monument



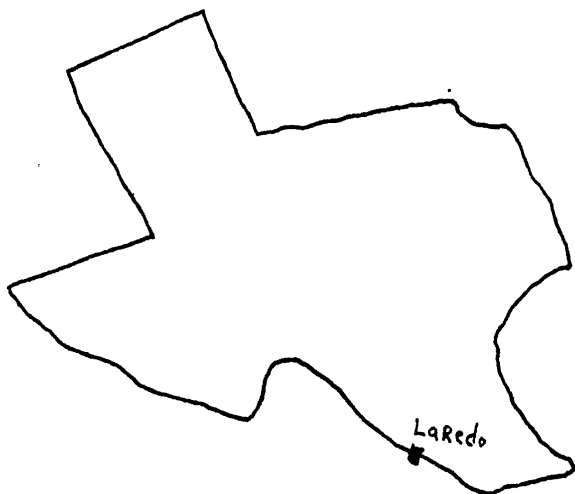
Pan American Marker placed in center of International Bridge



Monument to Deaf Smith, Country Club grounds

Chapter One

Location, Population and Climate



WEBB COUNTY, of which Laredo is the county seat, is a veritable empire in size, being larger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined; its frontier extends nearly one hundred miles along the Rio Grande. The city of Laredo is located in the south central portion of Webb County, in the valley of the Rio Grande, on the left bank of the river. Being located on the Pan-American Highway from Maine to Mexico City, it is the place where nation meets nation.

The population of Laredo, according to the 1940 census, was 39,274, and this showed an increase of twenty percent from 1930.¹ In May of 1942 there were 42,560 war rationing books issued in the city.² Laredo has had several extensive booms, causing a great influx of people, and there has been a steady increase throughout the years. Census records since 1860, and other records gathered before that date, show a consistent growth.³

Laredo includes within its corporate limits fourteen square miles, and the city has a population of 3,039 persons per square mile.⁴ The composition of the population in the city shows that seventy percent of the population is Latin American. The composition of the population shows the following:⁵

DESIGNATION	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Native White (Mexicans)	42.6
Native White (Americans)	28.3
Foreign-born White, principally Mexicans	27.4
Negroes	1.7
Total	100 %

The distribution of population by sexes in Laredo,

¹ *Texas Almanac*, 1941-42, p. 99.

² F. P. Botello, Head of the Laredo Rationing Board, to Kathleen Da-Camara, May 10, 1942.

³ Appendix, Table I.

⁴ Chamber of Commerce Industrial Survey made in 1938 by Ricardo Perez.

⁵ Central Power and Light Company, *Industrial Survey of Laredo*, p. 21.

as computed from the records of the United States Bureau of Census shows:⁶

Males	47.6
Females	53.4

The total number of families in Laredo is 9,469. The percentages of population by age groups in Laredo are as follows:⁷

Under 5 years	9.1
5 to 9 years	11.4
10 to 14 years	10.8
15 to 19 years	10.8
20 to 44 years	38.4
45 and over	15.3
Age unknown	5.1
Total	100 %

The census of Laredo, taken June 22, 1757, showed eleven families, containing eighty-five persons. Apparently all of these were Spanish or of Spanish origin, Creoles born in Mexico of Spanish stock.⁸ The next authentic census was taken in January, 1789, and showed seven hundred people composed of pure Spanish mestizos (mixed Spanish and Indian stock), and mulattoes (mixed Spanish or Indian and Negro stock), and in addition there were one hundred ten Carrizo Indians living in the corporation.⁹ The census of 1819 showed nothing but Spanish and mestizos living in the town, with no Europeans listed. The census of 1828 stated that the inhabitants were mostly Spanish, of an average height of five feet, and of light color, and that they were of a healthy and robust constitution.¹⁰

When Mirabeau B. Lamar was stationed in Laredo in 1846 and had a census taken, there was not a name

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸ H. E. Bolton, "Tiendo De Cuervo's Ynspección de Laredo, 1757," *Texas Historical Quarterly*, VI, pp. 44-63.

⁹ Laredo Archives (unbound), report of Miguel Ponce Borrego, dated at Laredo, January 28, 1789.

¹⁰ Laredo Archives, Census Report of December 10, 1828.

listed that was not of Spanish origin, the people then being all Mexicans.¹¹

Many Americans had visited Laredo long before this time. Among those who passed through Laredo in those early days were Dr. James Long, James Grant, Ruben Ross, Stephen F. Austin, and Henry Clay. With the coming of the American forces under Lamar in 1847, many others than those in the army came to Laredo and continued to live there. Other nationalities visited in Laredo, and some settled there in the early years. For instance, John Z. Leyendecker, who was born in Germany, came to Laredo in 1847 and married into one of the native families (Benavides); Raymond Martin, born in France, came to Laredo in 1852 and also married into one of the Laredo families (García-Benavides). By the 1850's many Americans and those of other nationalities were found in Laredo, and by 1885 all races were represented there. Laredo was a cosmopolitan town.

In the 1890's the leading Mexican families were the Benavides and Ortíz brothers, and the García, Sánchez, Gonzales, and Rodríguez families. Father A. M. Souchon, a native of France, was the pastor of San Agustín Church. Quintín Villegas, a native Spaniard, was in the grocery business, as was also Joe Sielski, of Polish ancestry. J. Deutz and sons, Germans, were in the hardware business, and Alphonse Siros of France sold tinware and roofing. George Pfeuffer and John O. Buenz, both of German origin, ran a lumberyard.

Joseph Christen and his son Louis, who were French, ran the Commercial Hotel. A. M. Bruni and brother, natives of Italy, were proprietors of a wholesale and retail store. J. Armengol, a Spaniard, was located on Market Plaza with a wholesale, retail, and liquor store. H. Schmidt, a native of Germany, was the leading tailor, having an establishment on both sides of the Rio Grande. H. A. and Paul Sauvignet, from France, were running the ice plant. Celestine Jagou, assisted by Robert Fasnacht, both from France, catered to the elite in serving wines and liquors. Charles Moser, a Jew, and

¹¹ *Lamar's Papers*, VI, pp. 44-60.

Joe Werthman, a German, owned an ice cream parlor. C. M. McDonell, leader of the "Botas" party, was from County Down, Ireland. These were the leading citizens in Laredo during the 1880's, and every one of them has descendants living in the city at this time.¹²

Today one will find practically every nationality represented in Laredo: American, Mexican, Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Filipino, English, Australian, Swede, Negro, Cuban, Italian, and Canadian.¹³

Laredo's climate is very mild in winter and pleasant in summer, with consistently low humidity and no fog. During the summer months of June, July, and August, the days are hot, but the nights are always pleasant. Southeast breezes sweep up the Rio Grande, making the evenings enjoyable. The average temperature during the summer is ninety-six degrees, and during the winter it is seventy-two degrees Fahrenheit. The highest temperature ever recorded in Laredo by the United States Weather Bureau was one hundred fifteen degrees, and the lowest ever observed was ten degrees Fahrenheit.¹⁴ A night reading of fifty degrees in winter is the warmest of the Gulf Coast, Southwest, or Pacific Coast cities, as shown by the following temperatures recorded by the Department of Agriculture.¹⁵

Laredo	72.6
Brownsville	72.1
Tampa	72.2
Pensacola	62.8
New Orleans	65.5
Houston	65.5
San Antonio	68.7
Phoenix	68.4
Los Angeles	66.7
San Diego	63.4

The sun shines about three hundred and fifty days

¹² Seb Wilcox, "The Laredo City Election and Riot of 1886," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, July, 1941, pp. 5-6.

¹³ Naturalization Records in the United States District Clerk's office.

¹⁴ William Gregg, United States Weather Bureau, Map showing the highest and lowest temperatures ever recorded.

¹⁵ *Climatic Summary of the United States, Section 31, Southwestern Texas*, United States Department of Agriculture Weather Bureau, p. 12.

of the year, or about two thousand eight hundred hours.¹⁶ The Table of Temperatures shows that the months of November, December, January, February, and March have the most enjoyable climate. Laredo compares with other cities in climatic factors as follows:¹⁷

CITY	LAREDO'S	LAREDO'S HUMIDITY	LAREDO'S
	TEMP. ABOVE	LESS	WIND VELOCITY
			MORE
San Antonio	2.3	-- 3	23%
Austin	2.4	-- 5	31%
Brownsville	2.9	- 16	12%
Houston	3.8	- 16	14%
New Orleans	3.1	- 10	72%
Tampa	5.4	- 13	40%
Birmingham	5.7	- 6	45%

The average rainfall is 19.45 inches per year, and is divided as follows:¹⁸

January -----	.77	May -----	2.63	September ..	2.86
February -----	.97	June -----	2.05	October -----	1.65
March -----	.90	July -----	1.66	November ----	1.24
April -----	1.51	August -----	2.20	December ----	1.01

The average unmelted snow for Laredo annually is less than one inch.¹⁹

The altitude is four hundred sixty feet, and the wind velocity averages about ten miles per hour.

The birth rate of the city of Laredo compares favorably with such rates in cities of approximate size in the state of Texas, being 20.9 per thousand people.²⁰

The mortality rate of Laredo is low, being 9.8 per thousand, and reflects the healthful conditions existing within the community. The actual average for the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 19, 20, 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, a comparison made by the writer.

¹⁸ United States Department of Commerce Weather Bureau, Map showing annual precipitation.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

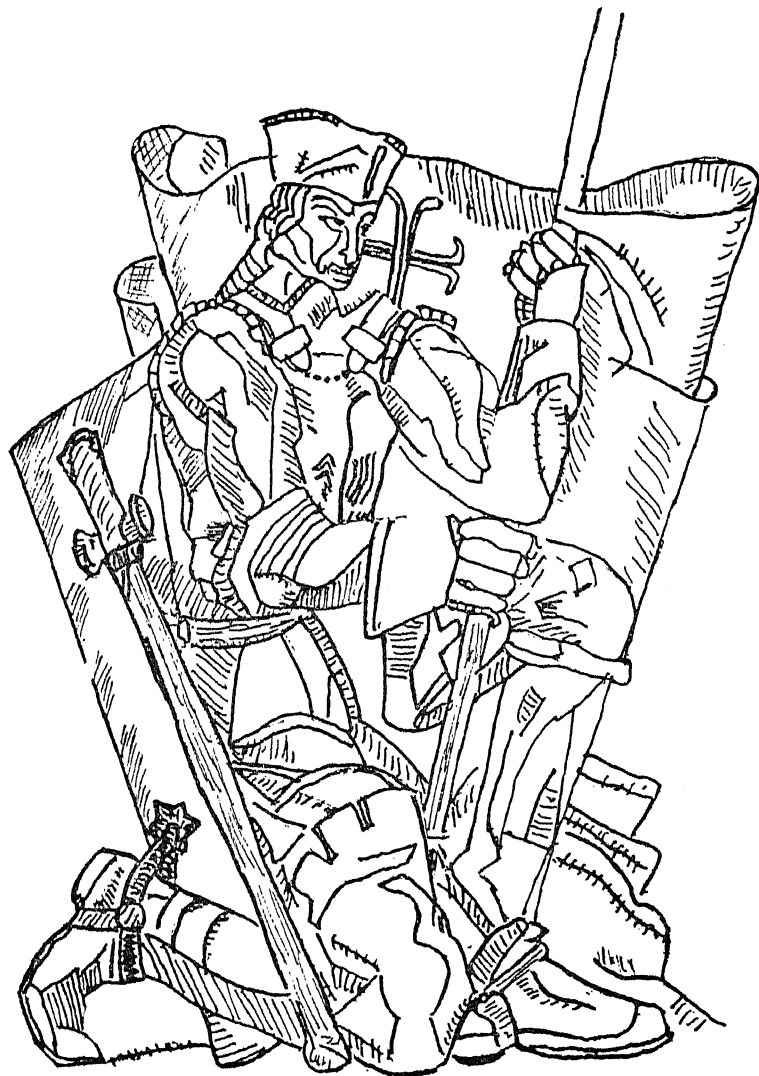
²⁰ Central Power and Light Company, *Industrial Survey of Laredo*, found in Martin High School Library, p. 22.

United States is 11.8 per thousand.²¹ Sanitary conditions are maintained at a high standard because of our peculiarly favorable climate. The vital statistics of the Laredo area are a matter of local pride.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Chapter Two

Early History of Laredo



AS EARLY as 1526 Father Andrés Olmos and a small party explored as far north as the Rio Grande. They were the first representatives of civilized man to reach the Lower Rio Grande.¹ In 1630 efforts were again made to explore the coastal region, but the invaders were driven back by Indians.²

In 1747 José De Escandón, Regimental Colonel of the city of Querétaro, Mexico, and a Knight of the Order of Santiago, left Querétaro, with a great convoy of colonists and soldiers, for the exploration and colonization of the unknown lands of Nuevo Santander, as the State of Tamaulipas was then known. Escandón profited by the mistakes of his predecessors, for he went well armed. He reached his objectives and successfully established several colonies, the first settlement being at Camargo, founded March 5, 1749.³

The province of Nuevo Santander extended approximately the six degrees, lying between the parallels of twenty-two and a half and twenty-eight and a half north latitude. Its natural limits were the Bar of Tampico on the south, the Bay of Espíritu Santo on the north, the Gulf of Mexico on the east, and the Sierra Madre Mountains on the west. Originally the province included about sixty-eight hundred square leagues of territory.⁴

In the early part of 1750, Tomás Sánchez located a crossing on the Rio Grande, and this crossing became known as "El Paso de Jacinto." It was later used by soldiers and travelers for many years and became known as "El Paso de los Indios." Sánchez brought his flocks and herds across, and established a "*ranchería*" to the north of the Hacienda de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Dolores.⁵ He presented himself to Escandón, proposed to found a town where he had established a *ranchería*, and offered to pay, out of his

1 Frank Pierce, *A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, p. 15.

2 Laredo Times, November 23, 1937.

3 Lawrence F. Hill, *José Escandón and the Founding of Nuevo Santander*, pp. 69-88.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

5 An establishment founded by Escandón in Zapata County, on the Rio Grande, about twenty-five miles south of Laredo.

own funds, the expense of bringing the necessary families. Escandón accepted the proposition of Sánchez, but as he formerly had intended to found a town on the banks of the Nueces River, he requested Sánchez to examine the Nueces country, and select some point which he might consider convenient for the establishment of a village. Escandón had previously sent some families from Nuevo Leon to the Nueces country, but they had found conditions there unfavorable.

Because of lurking bands of Indians, Sánchez could not penetrate to his destination on the Nueces River, and he was compelled to return. He reported that the lands were not suited for the desired settlement, and that he would abandon his offer unless he was permitted to remain on the "Rio Bravo." Escandón had returned to Santander but left orders with Vásquez Borrego that in case Sánchez confirmed the bad reports that he had formerly received regarding the lands of the Nueces, Sánchez might establish the town at the point selected by him.⁶

By virtue of this authority, Sánchez decided to conduct to his ranch the families with which to found the town, and on May 15, 1755, the town was founded and given the name of Laredo.⁷

The town was located on the north bank of the Rio Grande, about ten leagues above the establishment of Dolores. The nucleus of the town was laid in the vicinity where San Agustín Plaza and San Agustín Church now stand. The town was established by three families, and Don Tomás Sánchez was charged with its political and military administration. Laredo was not founded as a "presidio" (a town garrisoned by Spanish troops), and no mission for the Christianization of the savages was located here; therefore no government funds were furnished for its maintenance. It is the oldest independent settlement in Texas.⁸

⁶ Lawrence F. Hill, *José Escandón and the Founding of Nuevo Santander*, pp. 100-101.

⁷ Named in honor of the original inhabitants who came from the city of Laredo, on the Bay of Biscay, Province of Santander, Spain; Seb Wilcox, "Laredo During the Texas Republic," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XIII, p. 86.

⁸ Johnson-Barker, *Texas and Texans*, II, p. 635.

The town commons was composed of fifteen "*sitios de ganado mayor*," for the common use of the inhabitants without any division being made.⁹

The statistics of the town, as shown by the report of the inspector of Nuevo Santander in 1757, give it a population of eighty-five persons. They owned nine thousand head of sheep, goats, and cattle.¹⁰ The inhabitants found various kinds of fish in the river. They brought salt from Reynosa, and they sold hides, skins, and tallow to Santander, Aguayo, and Hoyo, from which places they brought clothing and food.¹¹ Frequently trips were made down the river in "*chalanés*," or flat-bottomed boats, to neighboring towns along the river front, where the local produce was exchanged for provisions.

The country around Laredo did not furnish timber for building purposes, but other materials were plentiful. Adobe bricks were moulded and dried in the sun. *Jacales*, or small huts, were erected, and the more fortunate families had stone walls surrounding their homes.¹² Some other people built their homes from natural rock, and still others made their huts of dried grass.

No formal distribution of lands was made to the settlers until 1767, when the Commission known as the "*Visita General al Pueblo de San Agustín de Laredo*" was made. This constituted the first chapter of the town. On June 9, 1767, notice was given to the inhabitants of Laredo, citing them to appear the following day for the purpose of commencing a survey of the town and lands. On June 10, 1767, the people assembled, and the survey was begun by first laying off the plaza, from which point the surrounding blocks and streets were marked. After the town was laid off, the commissioners proceeded up the river and surveyed "*Porciones*" in lots having one thousand *varas* along

⁹ A *sitio de ganado mayor* is 5000 square Mexican *varas* of grazing land.

¹⁰ Table II, Appendix.

¹¹ Bolton's Translation of "Tiendo De Cuervo's Ynspección de Laredo," *Texas Historical Quarterly*, VI, pp. 187-203.

¹² Seb Wilcox, "One Hundred Eighty-two Years of Progress," *South Texas Citizen*, April 30, 1937.

the river and a depth of thirty thousand *varas*, and these were given to the citizens claiming them.¹³ By virtue of his office as captain, Sánchez was given two *porciones*. The Spanish Department of the General Land Office of Texas at Austin and the Laredo City Secretary both have copies of the Act of Visit of the Royal Commissioners to the Village of San Agustín de Laredo. There were eighty-nine original grants of Laredo *porciones*.¹⁴

In the first election held under the new charter, Don José Martínez de Soto Mayor was elected *alcalde* for the year 1768, along with Don Salvador Hidalgo and Don Nicolás Castellanos as councilmen.¹⁵ It was at this time that Laredo really started as an incorporated town, with a complete set of city officials. By 1789 there was a population of seven hundred inhabitants and one hundred ten Indians. A church had been erected; forty-eight men had muskets and rawhide shields; nine stone houses and two of adobe were in place; and a troop of Spanish soldiers was permanently located in Laredo, with barracks and the necessary facilities for a military post.

At one time in 1790 the commander relaxed his vigilance, and a band of Lipan Indians attacked the post and captured the powder house. They held a war dance on San Agustín Plaza throughout the night, threatening the town proper. Resistance by the citizens and soldiers proved too strong, and the savages retired the next morning. Spain continued to maintain a body of troops there until the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1821. From 1810 to 1821 the town was the concentrating point for the Royal Spanish troops against the Revolutionists. The Revolution continued until 1821, and after remaining loyal to the mother country throughout the Revolution, Laredo took her

¹³ One thousand *varas* along the river front and a depth of thirty thousand *varas* was a half mile in width and eighteen miles in depth. A *vara* is thirty-three and a third inches.

¹⁴ Table III, Appendix.

¹⁵ Laredo Archives, Letter of José Ossorio, Secretary, dated Laredo, April 8, 1768.

place in the affairs of the new republic as a part of the new state of Tamaulipas.¹⁶

On March 23, 1822, Stephen F. Austin visited Laredo on his trip from San Antonio to Mexico City to have his contract for a settlement in Texas ratified by the government of Mexico. He was forced to wait at Laredo until a large party of travelers was organized. During his stay he wrote to his brother the following:

From the Medina River to Laredo, the country is the poorest I ever saw in my life, it is generally nothing but sand, entirely void of timber, covered with scrubby brush and prickly pear. Laredo is poor as sand banks, and drought and indolence can make it.¹⁷

The Indians wrought havoc on the ranches around Laredo, and by 1831 the population had dwindled from over two thousand to one thousand six hundred ninety-eight. In 1835 the census showed that there were nine hundred fifty-six females and one thousand twenty-three males. Of these, five hundred thirty-three were under the age of seven and only fifty-one over the age of fifty. There were one priest, two employers in the collection department, eighteen retired officials, twenty-three artisans, fifteen laborers, and one school teacher. In the business transactions of the city there were 6,834 pesos in commercial bills of exchange. The livestock consisted of one hundred fifty hogs, 5,800 sheep, 2,548 head of cattle, one hundred twenty-five mules, and five hundred forty-five horses.¹⁸

When Mexico took over the government, a military force was maintained at Laredo until the end of the Mexican control in 1846. During the war for Texas Independence, thousands of troops passed through Laredo. In 1836 Laredo served as a concentrating point for the Mexican forces, entertaining such officers as General Cos, Ramírez and Sesma, Filisola, Gaona, An-

¹⁶ Seb Wilcox, "Laredo During the Texas Republic," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, October, 1938, p. 89.

¹⁷ Barker, *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁸ Seb Wilcox, *The Historical Records Survey*, p. 240.

drade, and Santa Anna. In 1836, while Santa Anna was resting in Laredo on his march to the interior of Texas, he formulated his plan of attack against Texas. In theory Laredo became a part of Texas in 1836, but in fact it continued under Mexican rule, as Mexico claimed the Nueces as her north border. The disputed territory became the object of raids by Texans as well as Indians.¹⁹

In March, 1837, Erastus (Deaf) Smith and a company of Texans fought a battle with the Mexican garrison on the Arroyo Chacón near the present country club. It was a sharp fight, after which the Texans withdrew to San Antonio. "Deaf" Smith had intended to raise the flag of independence on the spire of the church.²⁰

The years 1837 and 1838 were hard ones. Soldiers were always passing through the town, and levies were made for foodstuffs and mounts for the army. Ranches were depleted of livestock because of the increased Indian raids, and the people were living on meat alone, as they thought it unsafe to go to the fields to plant crops, and it was impossible to bring food from other towns.

In 1839, during the Federalist Revolution against the Centralists in Mexico, the Republic of the Rio Grande was created and Laredo was named its capital.²¹ The Republic was short lived. The people of Laredo joined the Federalists because they had not been able to secure any relief against the Indians from the Mexican Government. The central government of Mexico afforded little protection to Laredo during this period. Don Basilio Benavides, alcalde of Laredo, tried to secure help from the Mexican Government but was rebuked by the Mexican generals.²²

¹⁹ Seb Wilcox, "Laredo During the Texas Republic," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, p. 90.

²⁰ Archives of San Agustín Church, Laredo, "Defunciones," II, p. 24, entries Nos. 108-110.

²¹ This was a revolution between the Central government in power and the people of Northern Mexico, known as the Federalists. The Federalists wanted the return of the federal system of government.

²² Laredo Archives, letter of Vicente Filisola to Justice of the Peace, Laredo, dated Matamoros, July 30, 1838.

In 1842 Don Florencio Villareal was alcalde of Laredo and Reyes Ortíz and Miguel Dovalino were aldermen. It was in this year that General Adrian Woll and one thousand four hundred Mexican troops captured the entire personnel of the District Court in San Antonio and then returned to Mexico. The people of Texas were aroused, and troops began to concentrate in San Antonio. General Alexander Somervell and a body of Texans marched to the Rio Grande with the intention of invading Mexico. When they arrived in Laredo, the entire Mexican force had withdrawn across the river. The supplies of the town proved to be insufficient for the Texas troops, and after a day on short rations, the soldiers became dissatisfied and pillaged the town and moved down the river. A portion of Somervell's command crossed the river at Mier and surrendered after a bitter fight. The others had returned to Texas. This invasion is known as the Mier Expedition. The Texans were placed in chains and marched to the interior of Mexico. On February 11, 1843, the Texans made a break for liberty at Salado, but they were soon caught again. They were taken to Mexico City and after a long confinement, they were liberated and a few of them returned to their homes in Texas.²³

Laredo still continued under Mexican control, with a garrison of troops in the place. In 1846 Zachary Taylor moved into Mexico at the head of the American forces, and the United States asserted the claim of Texas to the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande. Captain Gillespie came to Laredo from San Antonio and captured the garrison there. He was the first to fly "Old Glory" over the city. After taking Laredo and capturing the garrison, he returned them to the alcalde and moved into Mexico. Up to this time Laredo had never been held for any length of time by an American force. These occasional visits were made more in the nature of reprisals than attempts to take over and hold the town.²⁴

²³ Seb Wilcox, "Laredo During the Texas Republic," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, pp. 102-103.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

General Taylor commissioned Mirabeau B. Lamar, the second president of the Republic of Texas, to recruit a company to march to Laredo and take charge of the place. Lamar took charge of the town, and his troops were quartered in houses around the plaza.²⁵ In Lamar's report to General Taylor he gave a gloomy picture of the conditions of the town. Lamar spent several years in Laredo, and this is what he wrote:

Laredo is a very little more than a heap of ruins. There is scarcely a home that is comfortable in the place. The desolation was the effect of the most unprecedented rains which fell in 1842, and from it never revived. It is an isolated town, much exposed to the ravages of the Indians, and has suffered greatly from that source. Seven hundred of its inhabitants have been killed in the last twenty years. . . . Among the inhabitants an epidemic has prevailed to an alarming extent, attended with great mortality. I considered the circumstances as justifying the permission which I gave for the public medicines to be used among'st the citizens. I did this from a spirit of humanity as well as conciliation.²⁶

General Lamar began to bring the territory around Laredo under the control of the United States. He ordered an election of two justices of the peace, a constable, and a county commissioner. On July 3, 1847, this election took place and was the first election in Laredo under the authorities of Texas. Laredo's first representative to the Texas Legislature was Don Basilio Benavides.²⁷

Lamar and his troops remained in Laredo until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, and the jurisdiction of Texas extended to the Rio Grande. On receiving order number one hundred fifty-six from the headquarters of General Taylor's army of occupation in Mexico, ordering the Texas Volunteers to repair to Camargo to be mustered out of service, Lamar replied to the Aide-de-Camp, Lieutenant Charles Helm, as follows:

²⁵ *Lamar's Papers*, IV, pp. 141-144.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 69.

²⁷ *Laredo Times*, November 23, 1937.

Before leaving here, however, I will respectfully suggest to the general, the propriety of not breaking post at the present moment. Indians are known to be in this section of the country, seeking to do mischief, and it would seem imprudent to leave Laredo exposed to their depredations. It is very difficult to restrain the Indians entirely, but the presence of a military force is considerable protection without which the place will probably be doomed to calamity which it experienced for years under the Mexican government.²⁸

In all probability this recommendation of Lamar had a great deal to do with the establishment of a permanent military post at Laredo, a fact which will be discussed later.

Like all other places in Texas, especially along the frontier, Laredo was at one time infested with a lawless element that had no limit in their atrocities. In those days the best marksman was the best man, for a man was not measured by his affluence, or by his virile manner; he was measured by his ability "to get the drop on the other fellow." In the early days the Indians would ride into town, or lurk in the chaparral until nightfall, and then begin their hellish work, and on many a night the heavens were illuminated by the burning cabin of some settler who had aroused the animosity of the savages.

Another class of bad characters who plied their trade in early days and would not hesitate at the taking of human life, if interfered with in their work, were the smugglers who operated mostly after nightfall. The bravest of the brave in those days were the men who held positions as customs guards, for these were men of real mettle. Oxcarts and long trains plied their way from various points in Mexico through Laredo and on to Corpus Christi laden with skins, hides, wool, precious ores, and other materials, taking them to Corpus Christi for shipment by steamer to New York, and then returning to Laredo with cargoes of general merchandise. These wagons at times carried hundreds of thousands of dollars in gold besides their cargoes of goods. Often being lightly guarded by a force of horse-

²⁸ Seb Wilcox, "Fort McIntosh," *Epic-Century Magazine*, pp. 5-7.

men, they were attacked by brigands. There are many thrilling tales related by old-timers regarding these battles.²⁹

When the Civil War cry resounded through the land in 1861 and American was pitted against American, Laredo sent a number of American boys to the front, and also a regiment in which several hundred native-born American-Mexicans cast their lot with the Southland. Colonel Santos Benavides took charge of Fort McIntosh and headed a troop of cavalry with headquarters at Laredo. Laredo and the rest of the Mexican border became an outlet for cotton, as it was sent to these border ports and then shipped into Mexico or shipped down the Rio Grande as Mexican cotton, thus evading the blockade. The Federal Government knew that vessels had been cleared from northern ports for Matamoros, laden with all sorts of articles which were clearly contraband, and these were destined for the Confederacy, but the Government did not want to cause any trouble with the Mexican Government at that time.³⁰ At one time Colonel Benavides had five thousand bales of cotton belonging to the Confederacy stored in Laredo. The activity of the war brought people into town and Laredo profited. However, up to the time of the Civil War, the changes that took place in Laredo were not many. It was in the latter part of the 1870's that the great transformation of the old dormant Laredo was enacted, and the old town was aroused from her lethargic state.³¹ This was caused by the coming of the railroads to Laredo and the developing of farming around this area.

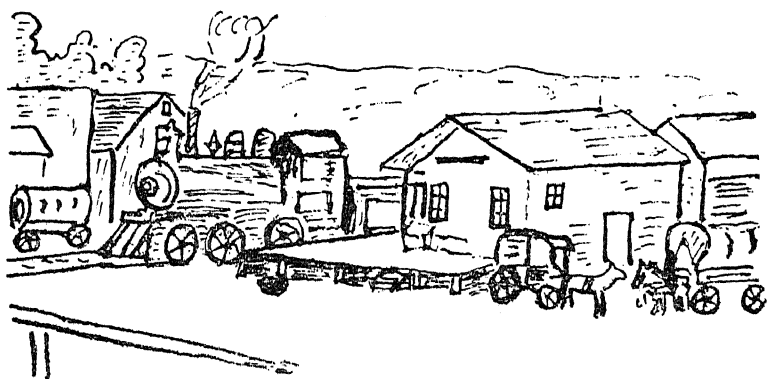
²⁹ James F. Falvella, a typewritten article on the founding of Laredo. This article may be obtained from him.

³⁰ *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, XVII, pp. 401-403.

³¹ James F. Falvella, Article on the Founding of Laredo, Christen School Library, Laredo.

Chapter Three

Later History of Laredo



LAREDO was incorporated under the laws of Texas in January, 1848, and the first white man to serve as mayor was W. F. Alexander.¹ At the time of the Civil War, Laredo was a quaint Mexican village; though incorporated as a city, only a few families lived there. In 1880 there was an American population of less than fifty. There was not an American building of modern architecture and design in the city; the only kind of building existing was the one-story, square-built, flat-roofed stone or concrete structure, both homes and business houses.²

Water from the river was delivered to one's door, but it was hauled by a burro attached with chains to iron pegs projecting from the heads of the common whiskey barrels that were rolled on the streets. Each barrel of water was sold for one "real," worth 12½ cents.

A ferry was operated between the two Laredos. Passengers would take the wooden skiff to go to and fro, paying 12½c for adults and 6¼c for children. That ferry company issued their own money in these denominations.³

Before 1881 the only method of transportation was by oxcarts. Mr. Charles Deutz wrote an account of his journey from San Antonio to Laredo in one of these carts, and it took him two weeks to make the trip.⁴ In November, 1873, the Corpus Christi, San Diego, and Rio Grande Railway was organized under state charter, with Colonel Thomas Roberts as president. In 1876 construction was started, and Captain King and Captain Kenedy helped finance it. Ninety-five miles at an estimated six thousand dollars per mile were built under Uriah Lott's management. Then the line was sold to the Palmer syndicate. In 1881 the line reached Laredo and formed a connection with the Mexican National Railway. In a few years it became known as the Tex-Mex Railway. Besides traversing and serving the territory between Corpus Christi and Laredo, it also

¹ Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, Vol. III, p. 343.

² The Laredo *Daily Times*, November 23, 1937.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The Laredo *Daily Times*, October 17, 1937.

offered a connection for the deep water port at Corpus Christi for the commerce of Laredo.⁵ One train daily goes to Corpus Christi over this railroad, and one returns each day. Freight service includes two trains in and out of Laredo to Corpus Christi daily.

The Missouri Pacific Railroad traverses the territory between Laredo and San Antonio. This railroad was first known as the International and Great Northern Railroad, and it entered Laredo in the latter part of 1881. On January 15, 1881, a contract was made with the Railway Improvement Company to build the western extension from San Antonio to Laredo.⁶ Two trains leave the city each day for San Antonio over the Missouri Pacific Railroad and two arrive each day. Railway freight service includes one train in and out of Laredo to San Antonio.

In 1882 two more railroad lines were built, namely the National Lines of Mexico and the Rio Grande and Eagle Pass Railway Company. The National Lines traverse the territory between Laredo and Mexico City. Passenger service includes two trains daily arriving at Laredo from the interior of Mexico. The Rio Grande and Eagle Pass Railway Co. has now been dissolved.

The coming of the railroads revived interest in the upbuilding of the town, and a boom followed. About this time the Cannel Coal mines at Minera and Dolores, about twenty-three miles northwest of Laredo, were opened. Colonel Rutherford opened the first coal mine at a little town called San José. At first the coal was shipped on flat barges down the Rio Grande, but this was found to be unsuccessful, so it was brought in wagons to Laredo. In 1882 Colonel Rutherford was declared bankrupt, and D. D. Davis took over the mines. Mr. C. B. Wright bought over a thousand acres of land there, and the name of the town was changed to Dolores in honor of his daughter. In the latter part of 1882 the Rio Grande and Eagle Pass Railroad, running from the coal mines to Laredo, was completed.

⁵ Mc Campbell, *Saga of a Frontier Seaport*, p. 27.

⁶ Mr. Burnell, Auditor of the Missouri Pacific Lines, to Kathleen DaCamara, July 27, 1942.

The cannel coal of Dolores is of unique interest both economically and geologically.⁷ It is of economic interest because it is probably the largest body of cannel coal of bituminous rank in the United States. It is of geologic interest because it is not the high moisture soft brown lignite which is characteristic of coal beds of the same age. As a cannel coal it has special interest because, on distillation, such coal yields a much larger proportion of oil. It is a bright, glossy black coal, almost like pitch in appearance. It is harder than the average bituminous coal and can be shipped in open cars to any distance without deterioration; it can be stored, and will remain in good condition for many months. This coal was extensively used for many years by eighteen railroads and some manufacturers.⁸ At the present the mines are closed and cannot be reopened because they have filled with water, but there is still much coal there, and a new mine can be built. The Rio Grande and Eagle Pass Railway once served the mines and later the gunnery school but no longer makes any runs.

Besides excellent railroad facilities Laredo enjoys good bus and freight facilities. The Greyhound Bus Lines run three buses daily to San Antonio; the Union Bus Line runs three buses daily to Corpus Christi from Laredo, and the Transportes Del Norte runs four buses to Mexico daily. There is one each way from Laredo to Mission daily, two buses to Eagle Pass, and two to Asherton.

There are five freight lines, namely: Alamo Freight Lines, Arredondo, J. C. Netzer and Company, Acme Fast Freight, and Brown Express.

The coming of the railroads relieved the isolation of the border town. From this time many improvements took place.

James S. Penn published the first English newspaper in Laredo on June 4, 1881, and it was called the La-

⁷ Cannel coal is a coal of light texture and little lustre, containing much volatile matter and burning with a bright flame.

⁸ George Ashley, "Dolores Coal Mines," *United States Geological Survey Bulletin*, 691, pp. 1-30.

redo *Times*. It was a four-page paper, three columns on the front page being devoted to news items and editorial matter. The two outside pages were filled with editorials, news items, and legal notices, while the back pages carried additional advertisements and local items. The first sensational news printed by the *Times* was on July 6, 1881, announcing the assassination of President Garfield.

At the time the first issues of the *Times* were printed, the paper was a family organization, as Major Penn and all the members of his family assisted in the job of getting out the paper. A short time after the *Times* made its first appearance as a weekly paper, Penn attempted to turn the paper into a bi-weekly, but the move was not successful, and the paper returned to its original status as a weekly publication. Two years later, on September 6, 1883, the *Laredo Daily Times* was born. The first daily edition was similar to the weekly in that advertisements were carried on all four pages and news items squeezed in between. Subscription rates were quoted as ten dollars per year. In 1926 W. P. Allen and J. B. Hanway purchased the paper. This purchase was accomplished largely through the sale of stock to Laredo residents. Allen and Hanway each took twenty-five percent of the stock, another twenty-five percent was sold to various citizens, and the remaining twenty-five percent was sold to O. W. Killam. The *Times* was operated under this arrangement until the following year, when Allen bought all of the stock owned by Hanway and most of the stock owned by Killam. In the fall of 1928 the *Times* went into a holding company known as the Newspapers Incorporated. In 1934 Allen took the *Times* out of the corporation, and he took over all of the stock of the paper.

The Associated Press tickers bring all the national and international news to Laredo.⁹

During the 1880's the export and import trade and general trading with Mexico became important factors in the commercial life of Laredo, and American families in large numbers began to pour in to cast their lot

⁹ The *Laredo Daily Times*, August 10, 1941.

in the city. Laredo began to grow rapidly, and the old stone and flat top buildings began to give way to modern structures, with the result that Laredo had its first modern brick building constructed in 1882, it being the two-story county courthouse, which was later destroyed by fire.

In 1886 there was an election and riot which must be mentioned before we go into the later industrial and commercial history of the city. An old Mexican born in Laredo once remarked to Seb Wilcox that "as long as there are two Mexicans in Mexico there will be revolutions." Laredo's city elections, like those of other border towns, were conducted with much violence. During the city election of 1886 the citizen's party was known as the "Guaraches," and the other was the Democratic party, known as the "Botas." The Guaraches appealed mainly to the plebeian class, while the Botas appealed mainly to the aristocratic element. Raymond Martin and C. M. MacDonnell led the Botas, and Don Dario Gonzales was leader of the Guaraches. After a successful election the Botas planned a parade representing a mock funeral of the Guaraches; they printed many funeral notices in Spanish and distributed them in town inviting the Guaraches to attend their own funeral. The notice read:

YESTERDAY

At six o'clock in the evening there died
in this city and in the flower of their
youth

The Club Gonzales Guarache and its periodical
"The Voice of the People" and the "Syringe."

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

Their devoted partisans in announcing to the Grand Democratic Circle La Bota and to the Society "Unión Mexicano" such sad premature and unforeseen event, request their members and followers to raise to the Supreme Being the prayers that their piety may dictate for the eternal repose of the deceased, and to be present at the funeral and burial that will

take place today at three o'clock. The cortege will gather in the Hall of the Dos Repúblicas.

Laredo, Texas, April 7, 1886.¹⁰

The Guaraches threatened violence if such a demonstration was undertaken. Both parties arrived at Martin Plaza, both well armed, and a murderous riot followed. The commanding officer at Fort McIntosh had to send a body of United States soldiers to restore peace. Colonel Bernard of the United States Army immediately disarmed all participants, without regard to party affiliations, closed the ferry to Nuevo Laredo, and patrolled the town during the night and the following day.¹¹ Telegrams were dispatched to Governor Ireland and to the Adjutant General; martial law was declared in Laredo, and the State Militia was ordered out.¹² There is no authentic record of the number killed and wounded, but B. J. Leyendecker, an active Guarache, said that there were more than sixty killed and many more than that injured. One of the local undertakers, C. L. Fouzer, a Guarache, got tired of the political conflict and mock funerals. He decided to quit business, for he advertised:

Notice: Wishing to close out the Undertaking Business. I will from date, sell all caskets at cost prices, and furnish Hearse free to the funerals.¹³

By the following election all bitter feeling was healed, and the two parties joined to form the present Independent Club Party of Laredo, which has been in power since that time.¹⁴

In 1889 two important utilities came to the city, the electric street railway, the first to be built west of the Mississippi River, and the foot bridge connecting this city with Nuevo Laredo. Later the Central Power

¹⁰ In the Laredo Archives, one of the funeral notices has been preserved.

¹¹ San Antonio *Express*, April 9, 1886.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Laredo *Times*, July 14, 1886.

¹⁴ Seb Wilcox, "The Laredo City Election and Riot of 1886," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, June, 1941, pp. 1-23.

and Light Company bought the Railway Company, and in 1934 the company leased its equipment to the city; and it was then operated by the city under the management of J. B. Morton. In February, 1935, Morton was granted a franchise to continue the electric railway, but it was to be replaced by motor buses, and the officers of this company are J. B. Morton, President, J. C. Martin, Vice President, and Ella Devine, Secretary and Treasurer.¹⁵

The international bridge connecting Laredo and Nuevo Laredo was originally built in 1889. In 1903 it was destroyed by a cyclone and was immediately rebuilt. In 1920 it was completely destroyed by Mexican revolutionists. It was rebuilt and reopened in 1922. Its length is nine hundred feet over all. It is a toll bridge, being owned by the city of Laredo. The toll is five cents per person, ten cents for a small car, and fifteen cents for a sedan or other larger car.

The discovery of oil in Laredo brought about another boom. Within a year the building permits, according to A. R. García, exceeded a million dollars in value, and that amount doubled the next year.¹⁶ The oil industry in Laredo will be discussed later.

The question of paving the streets of Laredo was given impetus in 1921. When there was a heavy wind, the atmosphere was filled with dust; and when a heavy downpour of rain came, the streets were transformed into lakes of water and mud. The streets were very narrow, and traffic coming and going had to pass slowly to avoid collision. In 1922 the taxpayers of Laredo, by unanimous vote, carried a bond issue of one hundred fifty thousand dollars for the paving of streets. Then it was realized that a sanitary sewerage and a storm sewer system must be installed before paving, so bonds were readily voted for these purposes. All the bonds were sold at a premium and accrued interest, for Laredo had no outstanding indebtedness against the city treasury. Sanitary sewers were installed at a cost of thirty thousand dollars and the storm sew-

¹⁵ Laredo Times, November 23, 1937.

¹⁶ Table IV, Appendix.

ers for forty-one thousand dollars. In February, 1923, the contract was let for the paving of one hundred four blocks of the city at a cost of four hundred thousand dollars. After this was finished, the curbs were laid. In 1924 another bond issue of two hundred thousand dollars was voted for street paving. In 1937, four hundred forty-four thousand one hundred eighty dollars was spent for new sewerage facilities. Today there are one hundred fifty miles of streets in Laredo, and seventy-five of these are paved. There are forty-four miles of sanitary sewers, and sixteen miles of storm sewers.¹⁷

The tax rate on each one hundred dollars of assessed valuation in Laredo was:¹⁸

1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941
\$2.30	\$2.30	\$2.43	\$2.43	\$2.43	\$2.43	\$2.43
1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948
\$2.43	\$2.43	\$2.57	\$2.84	\$3.04	\$3.21	\$3.17

The assessed valuation of property rendered for tax purposes in Laredo is the following:

1935	1936	1937
\$16,710,645	\$16,221,305	\$16,240,265
1938	1939	1940
\$16,228,095	\$16,235,335	\$16,253,240
1941	1942	1943
\$20,462,323	\$19,276,699	\$19,651,941
1944	1945	1946
\$20,212,728	\$20,801,870	\$20,883,195
1947	1948	
\$22,302,722	\$22,659,109	

There are no tax exemptions allowed to new or expanding industries.

The assessment for taxation purposes within the city

¹⁷ Burt C. Blanton, Industrial Survey of Laredo, found in the Martin High School Library.

¹⁸ Gonzalo P. Farias, City Tax Collector, to Kathleen DaCamara, June 3, 1942, and June 14, 1949.

of Laredo is based on one hundred percent of actual value of land, sixty percent covering the buildings and improvement value.

The business, residential, and industrial sections of the city of Laredo are policed twenty-four hours of the day by the police force, working in three shifts under the direction of Dave Gallagher, Chief of Police. The police force is composed of thirty-seven policemen, including six in the office force, three detectives, two traffic police, eighteen patrolmen, and eight specials. Its equipment consists of two scout cars and two motorcycles. The department is equipped with an up-to-date fingerprint outfit. The police station is located on Flores Avenue in the old Market Building.¹⁹

The fire department of the city of Laredo is housed in three stations; number one station is located at 912 Matamoros, number two station at 1610 Guadalupe, and number three on San Bernardo Avenue. The personnel consists of a specially trained corps of twenty-seven firemen, including the fire chief, all of whom are trained in the drill school of the department which is patterned after the New York Fire College. Two firemen are assigned yearly to the A & M College of Texas firemen's course. The equipment of the fire department consists of:

- 2 American La France 750 G.P.M. pumpers
- 1 American La France 600 G.P.M. pumper
- 3 Hose and chemical wagons (booster tanks have replaced eighty-five percent of the chemical equipment). All of the above pumpers and hose wagons have hose bodies for one thousand two hundred feet of two and one-half-inch fire hose each.
- 1 American La France D.B. City Service and ladder truck with three hundred fifty-three feet of assorted ladders.
- A foam generator to fight fires in oil refineries
- 1 Packard truck, called a searchlight truck, fully equipped with two Delco electric plants, two stationary five hundred-watt floodlights, and four portable two hundred fifty-watt floodlights.²⁰

¹⁹ Dave Gallagher, Chief of Police, to Kathleen DeCamara, July 15, 1942.

²⁰ Fire Chief Renkin, Laredo, to Kathleen DeCamara, June 3, 1942.

The city of Laredo has no fire alarm signalling system except by telephone. The city has three hundred and two fire hydrants. The efficiency of the fire department is splendidly attested by letters from the Texas Fire Insurance Company. The fire losses of the city of Laredo for a period of eight years are as follows:

YEAR	AMOUNT OF LOSS
1932	\$28,825.69
1933	\$17,050.70
1934	\$18,356.23
1935	\$ 7,705.55
1936	\$ 1,918.15
1937	\$19,825.16
1938	\$10,334.40
1939	\$10,464.60
1940	\$ 7,133.61
1941	\$ 7,879.69
1942	\$ 1,763.29
1943	
1944	\$74,850.67
1945	\$45,732.08
1946	\$62,499.21
1947	\$62,728.54
1948	\$20,783.21 ²¹

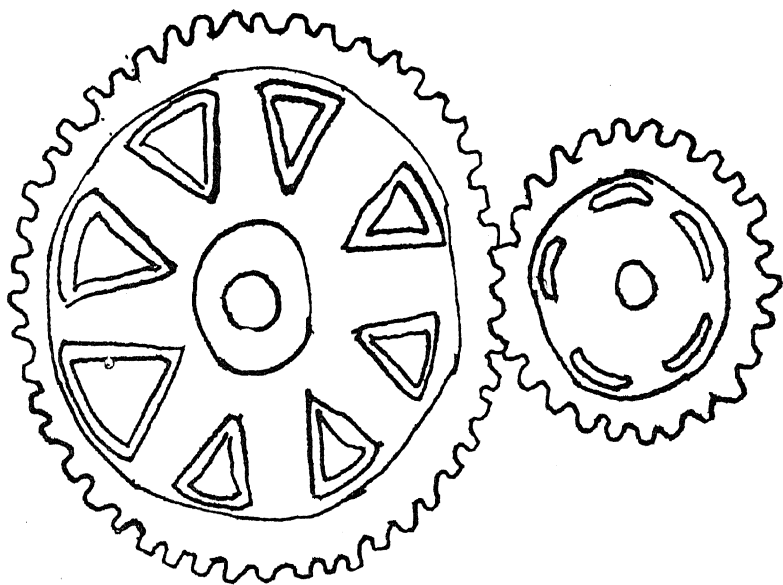
The officials of the city are: Hugh Cluck, Mayor; T. A. Leyendecker, Mayor pro-tem; James Haynes, City Secretary; Frank Hill, City Attorney; Dave Gallagher, Chief of Police; G. P. Farias, City Tax Collector; Abelardo Salinas, Tax Assessor; and R. Benavides, City Treasurer.²²

²¹ Mr. E. Pena, City Fire Marshal, to Kathleen DaCamara, August 9, 1942.

²² City officials, June, 1949.

Chapter Four

Commercial History



LAREDO'S principal industries are antimony smelting, straw hat manufacturing, cattle raising, winter vegetable growing, citrus fruit, oil, and natural gas. Its annual port clearance is in excess of eighty million dollars.¹ The custom brokerage business, based upon Laredo's key position, is a large industry.

The Bermuda onions were first grown for shipment in Texas, about 1898, at Cotulla, La Salle County, by T. C. Nye. They were successfully shipped to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they so attracted a commission merchant that he persuaded Mr. Nye to increase his acreage the next year.² In 1899, Mr. Nye bought some land four miles north of Laredo and planted onions there. He established a station on the railroad near the farm and named the station Nye. By 1906 more than five hundred carloads of onions were shipped through that station.³ At present there are over ten thousand acres of land under irrigation in North and South Laredo. The pumping plants, irrigation machinery, and pipes of the Laredo district represent a value of more than two million dollars.⁴ The smallest onion crop made in Laredo in the last thirty years was in 1938, when only eight hundred carloads were shipped. In 1942 a crop of 2,180 carloads was shipped at a gross profit of two million dollars. Onions sold at three dollars forty cents a sack at the opening of the season, but by the last of the season the price fell to a dollar a sack.⁵

There is practically no vegetable which cannot be grown in the Laredo area. The high quality of the irrigated crop grown there has made the central Rio Grande Valley famous throughout the United States. Approximately two thousand cars of onions, one thousand five hundred cars of spinach, and another one thousand five hundred cars of beets, carrots and

¹ E. H. Corrigan, Manager of the Laredo Port Commission, to Kathleen DaCamara, June 3, 1942.

² *Bermuda Onion Culture in Texas*, A & M College Bulletin, 65, November, 1932.

³ Johnson-Barker, *Texas and Texans*, II, p. 635.

⁴ L. A. Pierce, County Agricultural Agent, Kathleen DaCamara, June 23, 1942.

⁵ *Ibid.*

mixed vegetables are supplied throughout the entire winter and spring seasons from the irrigated farms of the Laredo district. In addition to the Bermuda onions, there are also commercial crops of tomatoes. Shipments of cantaloupes and watermelons have increased. The Laredo district grows the largest crop of broccoli of any section of the country,⁶ and as many as eight crops of alfalfa may be produced a year, which is an indication of the fertility of the soil and the mildness of the climate. The citrus fruit industry is gradually assuming immense proportions in Laredo, and at present there are between sixty and eighty thousand orange, grapefruit, and other citrus fruit trees growing in and around the city, while more land is being constantly devoted to citrus fruit culture. The mild climate of Laredo is adapted to this industry, and in a few years the city may be a competitor of the other sections of the country in the marketing of great crops of citrus fruits of all kinds.⁷

There is no other industry that furnishes as much labor for the people of Laredo, and near Laredo, as does truck farming. Fall crops are started in July, and spring harvesting is completed in June, so a large amount of labor is needed in the production, harvesting, and packing of crops from ten to eleven months of the year.⁸

Some of the world's greatest ranches are located within a few miles of Laredo. Of the 2,050,760 acres of county land, over 1,819,000 acres is pasture land. At the present time there are about 200,000 head of cattle, which together with the county's sizable goat raising and dairying make livestock rank high in the wealth-producing economy of Laredo and of Webb County.

The Laredo oil district in area is one of the largest in the country, with the forty fields having more than two hundred producing wells. The discovery of oil was not made by the oilmen, but by the ranch owners

⁶ Table VI, Appendix.

⁷ L. A. Pierce, Annual Agriculture Report of Webb County, 1941.

⁸ *Ibid.*

themselves. About forty years ago stockmen throughout the Laredo district were compelled to dig shallow wells because of the drought at that time. In 1908 the Reiser brothers of Reiser, Texas, discovered gas while drilling for water on their ranch, just nineteen miles east of Laredo. They applied for, and received, a permit to furnish gas in Laredo. This was taken over by the Border Gas Company.

When the Reiser field began to show a weakening of pressure and volume, the Jennings field was discovered. Next to be opened was the Mirando City field, and in 1921 O. W. Killam organized the Schott Oil Company. In 1926 the best field was the Caroline Texas field, which had a potential capacity of 220,000,000 cubic feet per day. The gas supply of the Laredo district is estimated from five to seven million cubic feet daily. The oil and gas industry has caused many of the operators, drillers, and their crews to make Laredo their home for themselves and their families. Most of the fields are known as shallow production with the deepest about 3,000 feet, according to geologists. There are possibilities of oil development in all parts of Webb County and adjacent territory, and the industry has taken its place, with cattle, as one of the leading sources of wealth.⁹

Import duties on Mexican merchandise at Laredo average four hundred thousand dollars annually. Sixty percent of the freight and ninety percent of the passengers pass to and from Mexico at the Port of Laredo.¹⁰ The number of tourist cars entering Mexico in 1948 was 34,894.¹¹ There is an approximate average of three persons per car. Two organizations, the Laredo Chamber of Commerce and the American Automobile Association, maintain offices in Laredo. The Laredo Chamber of Commerce has long made itself felt as a powerful factor in international affairs. It helped in securing the Pan-American Highway.

The present Laredo Port Commission is an out-

⁹ Laredo Times, November 23, 1937.

¹⁰ Laredo Port Commission, Table VII & VIII, Appendix.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Table in Appendix.

growth of a Laredo Chamber of Commerce committee on international traffic and came into being in 1940. It is made up of men particularly interested in this phase of Laredo's industrial life, and who have the background and the experience necessary to enable them to meet the various problems that arise. They aided in enlarging traffic space for freight inspection personnel. Among the various projects for which the Port commission has worked was the new three hundred thousand-dollar port building, and increased personnel of the United States customs, immigration, and Border Patrol. The commissioners of the port are E. H. Corrigan, W. W. Stein, A. E. Villareal, and A. M. Gault. The commission is made up of Federal Government officials, representing all phases of the Federal Government, city and county officials, importers and exporters, and custom-house workers.¹²

The discovery of oil in the Laredo district has had much to do with instilling new life into the community. A great building boom began, resulting in the construction of numerous handsome buildings, including the Laredo National Bank, Union National Bank, Richters Department Store, El Nuevo Mundo, Hamilton Hotel, Plaza Hotel, United Gas Co., enlargement of the Post Office, Mercy Hospital, M & S Clinic, the new Greyhound Bus Terminal, Neisner's, McLellan's, and the Plaza Theatre.

In 1888 A. C. Richter and E. Stumberg became partners in a store which they built. Stumberg had formerly bought a store from two merchants named Thomas and Writhoff. In 1889 Richter bought Stumberg's interest, and then laid the foundation for Laredo's largest merchandising center.¹³

H. B. Zachry Company was founded in 1924 and has been recognized as one of the largest construction concerns in the South, specializing in bridge construction and asphalt and concrete paving. The first major contract secured by the firm was the construction of

¹² E. H. Corrigan, chairman of the Laredo Port Commission, to Kathleen DaCamara, April 15, 1943.

¹³ Laredo Times, November 23, 1937.

some bridges on the Laredo-Corpus Christi highway. The home office of the H. B. Zachry Company is located at Laredo.

In August, 1930, the Texas Mining and Smelting Company started the construction of a smelter and refining plant. It is located six miles north of Laredo and is the only one of its kind in the United States. This smelter was an English concern that used to operate in Mexico. The company moved to Laredo and remained here, as they could get ores from the United States, South America, and Mexico. By December, 1930, the first furnace runs had been made, and the smelter went into operation in January, 1931. The two products of the smelter are antimony oxide and antimony metal. The smelter itself consists of some twenty buildings of substantial construction, housing furnaces, crushers, briquetting plants, laboratories, and other smelter machinery and equipment.¹⁴

The United States Customs, Agriculture, Fumigation and Immigration departments have been greatly enlarged, and these Government agencies mean payrolls of many dollars.

On December 22, 1939, Laredo became the headquarters for the 23rd Customs Collection District. This came about as a recognition of Laredo's predominance in the movement of merchandise between the United States and the neighboring Republic of Mexico.

The geographic and economic position of Laredo makes it the logical port of entry from Mexico, and because of its location, it will continue to lead other border cities for generations to come. There is no exact information available on the establishment of a customs service at Laredo; however, it was prior to October 18, 1851, on which date, in the files of the Customs House, appears an entry covering 52 *fanegas* (156 bushels) of corn, with a value of fifty-two dollars, imported by Basilio Benavides, who paid duty thereon in the amount of \$10.40. The next importation was made on October 24 of the same year, when Ventura Gonzalez imported three *cargas* (15 bushels) of flour

¹⁴ Laredo Times, November 23, 1937.

valued at \$15.00, on which duty was assessed in the amount of \$3.00. During the year 1851 the total of duties collected was \$113.35. The records from this year to 1874 are vague and incomplete.

The first collector of whom the Customs have a record was Ridge Paschal, who served from October 26, 1874, to October 9, 1889, with headquarters at Corpus Christi. Prior to that year the Collector was located at Indianola, a port of importance in the history of the Texas Republic. Laredo as a port has now a force consisting of a collector, an assistant collector, three deputy collectors, one liquidator, one chief and one assistant chief inspector, and sixty-eight inspectors, guards, and other employees.¹⁵

The first hospital consisted of six rooms and was located at 1312 Rosario Street, on the Heights. In 1894 the Sisters of Mercy bought the old Steffian home, facing Jarvis Plaza, the present site of the hospital. In 1902 the first extension was constructed. This was a north wing of two stories, with a chapel on the north-west end of the present building. In 1889, during the smallpox epidemic, and in 1903, during the yellow fever plague, Mercy Hospital and its corps of nurses did invaluable work in saving the lives of many of its Laredo victims. In 1915 the center portion of the new building was made a three-story structure. In 1928, the south wing of the hospital was built. In 1929, the eighty thousand-dollar conversion of the entire building into a three-story structure was started. Wooden floors over the entire building were removed and concrete and tile floors were installed. The complete hospital occupies almost an entire block. The building, which is both beautiful and useful, is fashioned of dark brick walls with colonnaded entrance porch. There is a clinical laboratory, metabolic room, X-ray department, obstetrical department, and a well-equipped operating room. There are fifty-one private rooms for patients, and four wards.¹⁶ This is Laredo's

¹⁵ *Laredo, Gateway to Mexico*, bulletin published by Pan American Livestock Association, 1943.

¹⁶ *Laredo Times*, November 23, 1937.

only hospital and it is now too small to take care of the needs of the people. A larger hospital has been planned and will be built on the Heights and run by the Sisters of Mercy.

The Texas Harvest Hat Company was organized in 1922, starting with a small factory having a daily production of about a dozen hats. This firm now employs over one hundred people and produces about five million hats annually in two hundred styles. Not only does this firm manufacture the harvest type of hats, but they also make a full line of semi-dress styles in a variety of patterns. Its slogan, "Texas Hats Shade the Nation," might be changed to cover the world, for sales are made not only in the United States, but also in Canada, South Africa, South America, and Hawaii. Its raw materials come from the Dutch East Indies, Philippines, China, and Mexico. Outstanding among their accomplishments were their contracts for supplying three thousand helmets to the United States Government to be used by the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the sale of over five hundred thousand popular Texas Centennial hats.¹⁷

There are eleven wholesale firms, four cold storage plants, and thirty-nine manufacturing concerns in the city.¹⁸

Electricity is furnished the city by the Central Power and Light Company. A two-way feed into the city gives dependable and adequate service. A sixty-six thousand-volt line leading into Laredo from the southeast connects the city with the large generating plants at San Benito, Corpus Christi, and Victoria. The sixty-six thousand-volt line entering Laredo from the north connects the city with generating plants and hydro-electric plants of the company on the Devil's River near Del Rio. In 1946 the Central Power and Light Company began a program of expansion. The

¹⁷ Mr. Snow, Assistant Manager of Texas Harvest Hat Company, to Kathleen DaCamara, May 30, 1942.

¹⁸ Bureau of Business Research, *Directory of Texas Wholesale Firms*, University of Texas, p. 22.

number of electricity consumers in Laredo for a period of ten years is as follows:¹⁹

1940	4360	1945	7505
1941	5042	1946	8289
1942	5466	1947	8461
1943	5767	1948	8579
1944	6684		

The water supply for Laredo is obtained from the Rio Grande. It is processed and filtered and then distributed through a city-owned and -operated system of the Laredo Water Works Company. The filtration plant was completed in 1928 at an approximate cost of five hundred thousand dollars. The plant represents a modern and efficient water purification system and has a daily capacity of six million gallons. The water distribution system consists of seventy-one miles of mains. The water storage tanks, located on top of a high elevation, provide a large amount of the two-million gallon capacity. The number of water consumers in Laredo since 1930 is:

1930	4423	1944	6033
1935	4380	1945	6677
1940	4871	1946	7041
1941	5017	1947	8069
1942	5211	1948	9125
1943	5445		

The minimum rate is two dollars for use of twelve thousand gallons, twenty-five cents per one thousand gallons for the next twenty thousand, twenty-two cents per one thousand gallons for the next twenty thousand, and twenty cents per thousand for the rest.²⁰

The United Gas Company obtains its gas at the city gates from the United Pipe Line Company. The present domestic rate in effect in the city is \$1.00 per 900 cubic feet, with a minimum charge of a dollar a month. Rates to large industrial consumers are

¹⁹ Burt Blanton, Technical Survey of Laredo, prepared for the Laredo Chamber of Commerce.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

furnished on application to the United Gas Company. The following chart shows the number of gas meters connected since 1932:

1932 -----	4790	1943 -----	6245
1934 -----	4943	1944 -----	6656
1936 -----	5119	1945 -----	7150
1938 -----	5175	1946 -----	7635
1940 -----	5351	1947 -----	7721
1941 -----	5581	1948 -----	7802
1942 -----	5951		

There are more gas connections than water connections because in the poorer districts the people carry water from the public school grounds or parks, and in many places one family is connected with water and the people in the whole block use it and divide the cost.²¹

The city of Laredo and its environs are served by the Bell Telephone Company. The following is the number of telephones in Laredo:²²

1932 -----	2734	1943 -----	4198
1934 -----	2698	1944 -----	4290
1936 -----	2833	1945 -----	4405
1938 -----	3445	1946 -----	4460
1940 -----	3493	1947 -----	5342
1941 -----	3578	1948 -----	6118
1942 -----	4184		

The Western Union Company maintains offices in the city of Laredo, at which place messages are received and dispatched.

The Post Office receipts of Laredo are as follows:²³

1930 -----	\$ 72,681.47	1942 -----	\$120,822.00
1932 -----	\$ 70,966.82	1943 -----	\$179,003.00
1934 -----	\$ 69,638.58	1944 -----	\$247,962.00
1936 -----	\$ 78,491.28	1945 -----	\$269,376.00
1938 -----	\$ 83,710.80	1946 -----	\$187,968.00
1940 -----	\$ 89,329.39	1947 -----	\$198,950.00
1941 -----	\$101,908.00	1948 -----	\$201,165.00

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

The number of families on relief in Laredo in 1948 was one thousand eight hundred fifty-six.

Labor of Laredo and Webb County may be divided into two general classifications: the labor following agricultural pursuits, and labor engaged in various activities in the city and county.

Ordinarily there is a plentiful supply of agricultural labor, drawn principally from the Mexican population. Several different methods of compensation prevail. There is day-to-day employment, monthly employment at a fixed amount per month, and piecework farm employment. Those employed in industrial and other labor are principally employed in oil production, oil refining, mining operations, and hat manufacturing. Typical rates in oil field operations and oil refineries are:

Common labor	40 to 50c an hour
Semi-skilled	80c to \$1.20 an hour
Skilled labor	\$1.25 to \$1.75 an hour
Machine operators	\$13.00 a day

The aggregate bank deposits in Laredo banks are shown in the following table:²⁴

1940	\$ 9,189,304.90	1944	\$19,111,037.00
1941	\$ 9,700,127.00	1945	\$22,357,047.00
1942	\$12,014,504.00	1946	\$22,658,951.00
1943	\$14,554,762.00		

The Laredo National Bank, founded in 1895, is the oldest bank in the city. It has twenty-five stockholders and some six thousand accounts. Its capital is three hundred fifty thousand dollars, its surplus and undivided profits amount to two hundred six thousand dollars, and its deposits amount to five million three hundred thousand dollars.²⁵

The Union State Bank was organized in April, 1928, and in 1937 it was chartered as a national bank. The Union National Bank has a capital of one hundred

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Payne Briscoe, President of the Laredo National Bank, to Kathleen DaCamara, June 24, 1946.

thousand dollars, the surplus and undivided profits total one hundred thirty-one thousand dollars, and the deposits average two million dollars.²⁶

The purchasing power or spendable income in Laredo in 1948 was \$44,000,000.

The tourist trade is equally as important as our ranching and farming. Many dollars are spent in Laredo by tourists entering and leaving Mexico. The following is a record of the number of tourists going through our city.

1940 -----	26,408	1945 -----	15,671
1941 -----	35,255	1946 -----	34,894
1942 -----	13,560	1947 -----	36,819
1943 -----	12,081	1948 -----	40,211
1944 -----	8,097		

The number of cars crossing the bridge going to Nuevo Laredo are:

1940 -----	333,441	1945 -----	453,880
1941 -----	308,459	1946 -----	533,461
1942 -----	312,792	1947 -----	575,353
1943 -----	357,709	1948 -----	596,616
1944 -----	413,706		

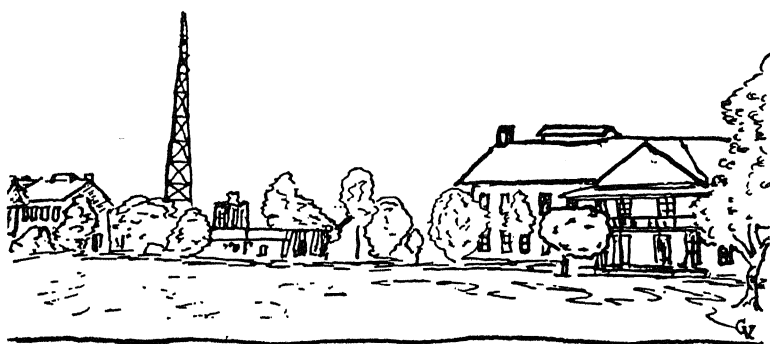
Radio Station KPAB was established on May 31, 1938, by M. M. Valentine, formerly connected with the Central Power and Light Company. Studios were established in the 4th floor of the Hamilton Hotel, and the transmitter building located at Gates & Loring. KPAB at that time was served by the transcription facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and Trans-Radio Press News Service. At a later date the studios were moved to the transmitter building. Then, in June of 1942 were moved to temporary studios in the Hamilton Hotel (ground floor). In 1943 KPAB joined the facilities of the Mutual Broadcasting System, bringing network programs to Laredo for the first time. In the early part of 1945 spacious and elaborate studios were established on the 2nd floor of the Ham-

²⁶ P. Stanford, Vice-President of the Union National Bank, to Kathleen DaCamara, June 24, 1946.

ilton Hotel, where it is presently located. KPAB is now operated by the Laredo Broadcasting Co. and is served by the Capitol transcription library, United Press radio news service, and is still affiliated with the world's largest network — the Mutual Broadcasting System. KPAB presents public service programs for Laredo and vicinity, being the only American station within a radius of 100 miles. These past eleven years have been full of history-making events, and KPAB is proud to have served the people of Laredo. Future plans for expansion are in the offing with a well-rounded and fully-balanced program schedule.

Chapter Five

Fort McIntosh



OLD FORT MCINTOSH was originally a star-shaped earthwork occupying an area of about one acre on a bluff some fifty feet above the waters of the Rio Grande. It was partly constructed by the Engineers Department and was finished by troop labor. Within was a fine magazine of stone with an arched roof overlaid with earth. There were descending steps, iron doors, and secure locks, and there was a tunnel under the river. This old fort stood near the most important place of entry along the Texas-Mexican border, the Indian Crossing. This for a century or more had been used by all the prairie schooners. The old fort adjoins the present Fort McIntosh on the northwest end of the military reservation, with its earthen walls still intact,¹ and a sign is posted there by the United States Army that reads:

Take no dirt away from this old fort,
Even Uncle Sam wants to preserve it.

According to the United States Army records of the Reservation of Fort McIntosh, the United States troops entered Laredo immediately after the Mexican War, and a post was established on March 3, 1848, and named Camp Crawford. This name was changed to Fort McIntosh in 1850 in honor of Lieutenant Colonel James McIntosh, who died in Mexico City in 1847. This post was abandoned in 1858, and its stores removed to Fort Brown near Brownsville, and the buildings, some thirty in number, then reverted to the city of Laredo, from which a tract of land, twenty-five hundred acres, had been leased. Upon abandonment of the post, the authorities of Laredo leased to the United States for a nominal consideration, for ten years, the old fort and five acres of land. In 1859 two companies of the First Infantry were sent to Fort McIntosh to take post. On September 7, 1860, the city of Laredo entered into another lease with First Lieutenant John Slaughter, covering the land on which the fort is lo-

¹ James F. Falvella to Kathleen DaCamara, May 16, 1942. Mr. Falvella obtained his information from the War Department through John Nance Garner and has the information on file.

cated. The land was leased for a period of twenty years, and during the period of lease the United States could buy the land if it was wanted.²

On March 2, 1861, at the outbreak of the Civil War, the post was abandoned by the United States garrison, and Colonel Benavides became commander of it during the war. In 1865 the Federal forces reoccupied the post, and it again came into the hands of the United States Government. The post has been gradually improved, and it is now headquarters for the posts along the river from Del Rio to Brownsville.

In 1870 many new buildings were erected. A hospital, post office, bakery, six quartermaster storehouses, and three barracks were built.

From 1900 till the First World War, the Ninth Infantry was stationed at Fort McIntosh, and when the war broke out they were moved and the Thirty-Seventh Infantry and the Sixth Field Artillery were stationed here. From 1916 to 1918 the First Infantry, New Hampshire National Guard, was stationed in Laredo. From 1920 to 1939 this post was the home of the Eighth Engineers, and these men were transferred to the Philippines in September, 1941. In 1942 Fort McIntosh was a cavalry post and about two thousand enlisted men and officers were stationed there. New barracks were constructed, old ones enlarged, and temporary buildings were set up.³ At the end of the war Fort McIntosh was closed. The northern half was turned over to the Boundary Commission and the southern half was given to the city. It is here that the Laredo Junior College is located.

In the northeast section of the city the Federal Government built a fifteen million-dollar airport, which was an advanced training and gunnery school during the war. The buildings of this airport were completed in 1942. There were about ten thousand officers and enlisted men stationed at this flexible gunnery school. There were barracks for Negroes and white men, two

² *Ibid.*

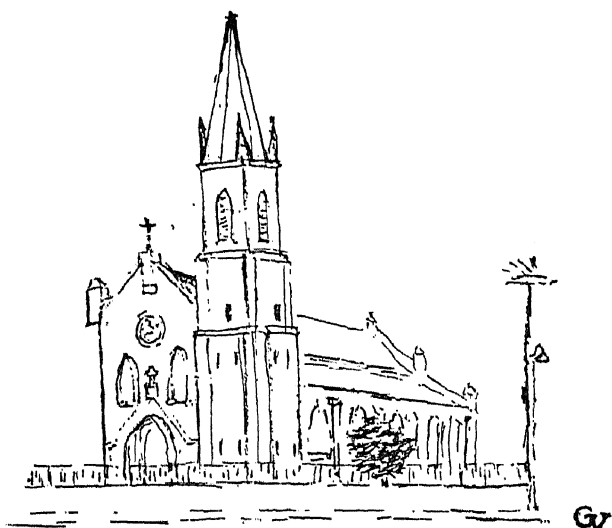
³ Fort McIntosh was open to the public on Army Day, and the writer saw the improvements.

large mess halls, recreational halls, and numerous other buildings. The plane runways were four hundred fifty feet wide and four thousand feet long. The gunnery school covered an area of fifteen miles.⁴ The airport has been given to the city. Laredo's Municipal Airport is one of the finest, and takes care of a large passenger and freight service. Other buildings have been leased for warehouses, and some have been sold.

⁴ Mr. Anglin, Chief of the Civilian Guards at the Laredo Air Field School, to Kathleen DaCamara, December 29, 1942.

Chapter Six

History of the Churches of Laredo



ONE OF THE most significant acts of the Visita General al Pueblo de San Agustín de Laredo was the specific recommendation that a church be built on a site previously chosen for that purpose; and that the colonists be required to work jointly on a piece of land formerly held in common, the profits accruing therefrom plus the proceeds from the canoe ferry to be set aside for the erection of a church.¹ Each person was required to bring so many rocks to the church grounds each week, and everyone had to devote a certain amount of his time in helping with the construction of the church.

As early as 1759 a church was under construction in Laredo, and it is claimed that it was finished three years before the Visita General.² Some authorities differ from this opinion and say that it was not completed until some years after 1767.³ According to Father Jesus Prieto, O.M.I., the second church was erected in 1778; then after a lapse of a century, construction was begun on the present church. The passing years have witnessed so many improvements that San Agustín today is quite a different edifice from what it was on that Sunday of December, 1872, when work was started. Toward the close of Bishop Verdaguer's administration, a marble altar replaced the old wooden one at San Agustín. In 1912, Reverend José Coma, then pastor, repaired the facade and put in stained glass windows. Later the chancel in front of the church was constructed and the inside renovated.

Until 1842 Laredo was a part of the Diocese of Guadalajara. When Laredo came under the control of Texas there was a change in ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Galveston now became the seat of the vicariate, and in 1874 the great Vicariate of Texas was divided into the Diocese of San Antonio and Vicariate of Brownsville. When Bishop Verdaguer became head of the diocese, he remained in Laredo and made San Agustín the cathedral. Until this time this region was only a vicariate, and in 1912 it was raised to the rank of a diocese, with

¹ Sister Mary Natalie, *History of San Agustín Church in Laredo*, an unpublished thesis, Texas University, p. 108.

² Laredo *Times*, September 30, 1934.

³ Sister Natalie, *History of San Agustín Church*, p. 110.

headquarters at Corpus Christi. Bishop Ledvina became bishop of the new diocese.⁴

Laredo now has six Catholic churches and a Catholic population of thirty-five thousand, according to a census made in 1942 by the Knights of Columbus. The Roman Catholic churches are: Saint Joseph, Saint Peter's, San Agustín, Christ the King, Holy Redeemer, and the Guadalupe Church. There are also many chapels in connection with the Catholic convents and orphanages.

There are six Protestant churches and two Jewish temples in Laredo.

The Reformed Jewish Church has a membership of one hundred, or about eighteen families. There is no Rabbi in Laredo, but the church council brings one from the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati for the special Jewish holidays. The Orthodox Jews have built a new Temple on Malinche Street. There are about eighteen families in the church.

Long before the Episcopal Church was built there were services held in various places. The first record was that of a marriage service in Benavides Hall, which was a building somewhere in the vicinity of the present market building. Sunday services were also held in the old jail. The Episcopal Church was built in 1883, and it has been enlarged twice since then. It is built of brick, and the inside walls are plastered. The pipe organ was installed in the church in 1911. The church is small and seats about two hundred, but there is a membership of over three hundred. In 1938 the rectory was renovated and turned into a parish house, and an auditorium was added.⁵

The Baptist Church was at first a one-room building between the present Bender Hotel and the *Times* office on Matamoros Street. In 1901 the present brick church was built, and a few years ago a large house across the street from the church was bought and renovated to be used for classrooms. The parsonage

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-114.

⁵ Miss Minnie Burr, historian of the church, to Kathleen DaCamara, August 3, 1942.

was built on the left side of the church. There are about five hundred members, and the property is valued at eighteen thousand dollars. The Baptist Church sponsors a day school including the first three grades.⁵

The First Methodist Church was an old house on the present church site, and the property was given by John Buenz. In 1917 a two-story structure was built, the upper floor being the church proper, the lower floor being divided into classrooms and a recreational hall. This Spring a new church and educational building was under construction on the Heights. It will soon be completed.⁶

The Reverend F. P. Ramsay was rector of the first Presbyterian Church in Laredo. This was a mission church on the corner of Iturbide and Salinas Avenue, and was controlled by the Home Mission Board. It was a one-room adobe house. The present church and manse were built under the direction of the Reverend MacMurray in 1901, and it was remodeled and enlarged in 1936. An annex was built to accommodate the Sunday School classes. There are about two hundred and fifty members, and the church property is valued at fifteen thousand dollars. The Presbyterian Church sponsors a day school which includes the first four grades.⁷

The Christian Church was the last of the Protestant churches to be built. It is a two-story brick building; the upper floor is the church proper, and the basement is a hall where the members have their social gatherings and where Sunday School classes are conducted.⁸

The Christian Science Church was built in 1933. There are seven families registered with the church, and there are services every Wednesday evening and every Sunday morning.⁹

⁶ Mrs. W. Mims, a charter member of the church, to Kathleen DaCamara, August 14, 1942.

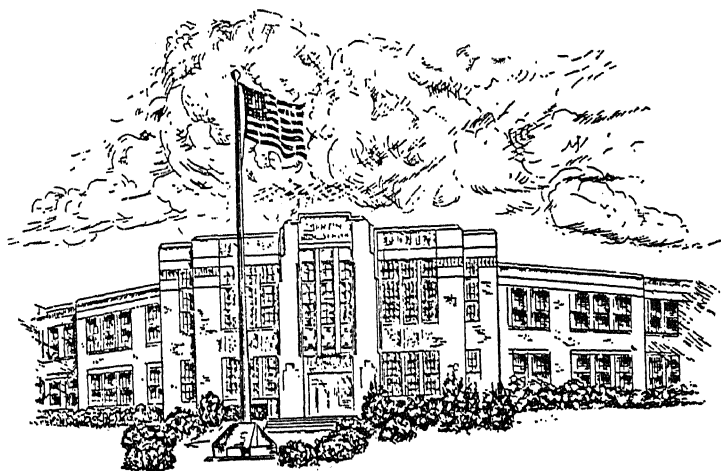
⁷ Mrs. Phillips, a member of the church, to Kathleen DaCamara, August 4, 1942.

⁸ Mrs. Charles Smith, member of the church, to Kathleen DaCamara, August 8, 1942.

⁹ Mrs. Hill, recorder for the church, to Kathleen DaCamara, 1942.

Chapter Seven

Educational Facilities



LAREDO has two business colleges, ten parochial schools and private schools, ten elementary schools, and one senior high school.

The Laredo Independent School District is one of the few districts still existing in the State of Texas that are known as city-controlled independent school districts. Its history dates back to 1783, when an order was issued by Lieutenant Chief Justice Santiago Sánchez that all children who had reached the age of twelve be sent to school. The document states:

In compliance with the Royal Decree of the Lord Governor which precedes: I must command and do command that within eight days which shall be counted from today, all the citizens who have children fit to enter school must be sent to learn to read and to learn the Christian Doctrine. Those unfit to learn to read must be sent to learn the catechism.¹

This was a free school for the majority of the children, as only those who had the money paid, and no one was turned away because he could not afford to pay. The selection of the teacher was left to the good judgment of the parish priest. The first school was a one-room building constructed of willow logs and chinked with mud and adobe blocks, the roof being thatched with grass.²

The Laredo Independent School District was constituted a separate one in 1882, at which time the city of Laredo assumed control of the public free schools within its boundaries. Originally the management and control of the public schools of the city was entrusted to a committee of three aldermen appointed by the mayor. In 1883 the city council created the office of city superintendent of schools and made him the executive officer of the board. This arrangement lasted until May, 1899, at which time it was provided that a board of trustees consisting of seven members, who would

¹ Father Phillip Steuber, scrapbook of newspaper articles originally taken from San Agustín files.

² Laredo Times, April 25, 1937.

assume the management and control of the schools, be elected by the people of the city.³

There has been a remarkable growth of the school population. Since 1899 the school enrollment has risen sharply from less than one thousand pupils to the present enrollment of twelve thousand six hundred forty-eight. There are two hundred forty-five teachers, vocational instructors, and supervisors, and the salaries for total instruction for the 1948-49 term amounted to \$980,200. A sum of \$97,300 was spent for other purposes, making a total expenditure of \$1,077,400. There are six thousand six hundred forty-three elementary pupils and one thousand three hundred sixty-eight high school students, and there are seven pupils in the Negro school. This does not include the vocational school or the Laredo Junior College.⁴

In 1927, bonds were voted for the erection of two buildings, Macdonell and Christen schools, and additions were made to other schools. Upon the passage of the National Recovery Act, the application was made through P.W.A. in Washington for a loan and grant of \$253,000 to erect a new high school, and the city added one hundred thousand dollars to it. The high school has a three hundred ninety-foot frontage and is set back two hundred fifty feet from Park Street. It is "L" shaped in plan and has south and east exposures. It was built of firesafe construction, with reinforced concrete and steel foundation. The exterior walls are of Laredo face brick, and the trimming and ornamentation are of cast stone. The corridor and entry floors are of terraza, the recitation room floors are of wood finish, and the administration suite, library, and foods laboratories floors are of linoleum. The finish of the gymnasium is of maple. The interior partitions are of metal lathe, plaster, tile, gypsum, and brick with plastic finish.

There is a radio address system throughout the building, controlled from the principal's office with any particular room or with all parts of the building.

³ Mr. W. P. Galligan, to Kathleen DaCamara, 1942.

⁴ Mr. J. W. Lemoine, Annual Staff Report, 1948-49.

The gymnasium, as an educational unit, accommodates two classes of sixty pupils each and contains lockers and dressing and shower facilities for this pupil capacity.

As a basketball arena, the unit provides a playing floor of seventy by one hundred four feet, and the concrete balconies seat one thousand people. A stage thirty feet by eighty-three feet is provided at the rear, which may be closed off by folding doors.

There are twenty-nine recitation rooms, four study halls, a dramatic room with a small stage, principal's office, and registrar's room with vault and storage room. The commercial department consists of an office practice room, bookkeeping room, and major and minor typewriting rooms. The cafeteria seats two hundred students. The library is equipped to seat one hundred fifty students, and has built-in book shelving. The room is thirty by sixty feet, with a ceiling of fifteen feet. In the homemaking department there is a clothing and a foods laboratory, each equipped for twenty-four students, a dining room, bedroom, and bath. In the science department there are laboratories for chemistry, physics, general science and biology, each equipped for thirty pupils. There is also a dark room. The high school offers forty-eight courses that are accredited by the State Board of Education.⁵

The Christen Junior High School has an auditorium to seat eight hundred, twenty-two classrooms, a principal's office, two book rooms, and a modern library. Additions have been made to Christen School twice since it was built. At present another addition is needed badly. This school takes care of all the seventh and eighth grades in the city. The gymnasium is a separate unit, and a regular physical education course for all the students is taught.

The Catherine Tarver School is an elementary school; that is, all of the sixth grades in the downtown section are taken care of here. There is also a homemaking department in the school where overage girls may

⁵ Mr. J. W. Nixon, Principal of Martin High School, to Kathleen Dacamara, July 6, 1942.

learn to cook and sew, and where crafts are taught to both boys and girls.

There are nine elementary schools, five in town and three on the Heights. The schools are Heights, Montrose, Buenos Aires, Central, Urbahn, Macdonell, Santa Maria, Saunders and Catherine Tarver school. There is a two-room Negro school for colored children, with Miss Grayson in charge.

Chief among the improvements in education in the public schools is the emphasis on vocational training for boys and girls who do not go on to college. There is a vocational school in connection with the high school where courses in mechanics, general metal, woodworking, and radio are taught.⁶

The Laredo Junior College was opened in the fall of 1947. In two years it has become affiliated with the Texas Association of Colleges and Universities. The Junior College offers the first two years of college work. During the 1948-49 term there were over a thousand students enrolled. There has been a definite need for a junior college for many years as there are so many students who cannot further their education outside of Laredo. The junior college gives these boys and girls an opportunity to have two years of college work, thus making them better able to find better positions, which will raise their standard of living. The Laredo Junior College also offers terminal and vocational courses for those students who have dropped out of school before finishing. A great number of these classes are held in the evenings so that students who work during the day may still avail themselves of this opportunity.

Saint Joseph's is a Catholic boarding school for boys. It is under direction of the Marist Brothers, a religious order. It was established in 1937, and its program of studies in all departments of the academy are similar to those in the public schools.⁷

The Ursuline Academy was founded in 1868. In the Ursuline Convent in San Antonio there had been a

⁶ Laredo *Times*, April 24, 1942.

⁷ *Ibid.*

nun from Brignoles, France, who gave her services to the San Antonio community then recently established. She returned to Galveston with the intention of returning to her home in France, but while she was in Galveston, Bishop Dubois begged her to come to Laredo and found a convent here. She finally gave her consent, and with a former pupil of hers, Sister Pereida, they proceeded to Laredo. They were met in Corpus Christi by John Z. Leyendecker, who brought them on to Laredo, and it took them twenty-six days to make the trip from Corpus Christi to this city. They began their work of teaching as soon as they had found a lodging, and the convent, which had not been completed earlier, was now built. In 1896 a new building was erected in front of the original convent. In 1940 the Ursuline Sisters sold their property to the United States Government for seventy-five thousand dollars, and they have now built a new convent on the Heights. This new building is fully equipped, and the school is accredited with the State Board of Education.⁸

The San Agustín Parochial School was built in 1929. Classes are conducted by the Sisters of Providence, and the school is accredited and gives high school work.

The first Saint Peter's School was probably located at 1701 Houston Street, where it is known classes were conducted by the Ursuline Sisters. Soon after, we find the Sisters teaching in the building located in the 1600 Block of Victoria Street and known as Saint Peter's School. In 1925 Father Dubourgel, with the consent of the Bishop, purchased the Blake Alexander home, and there started the grammar and high school departments of St. Peter's Parochial School. When the Ursuline Academy was completed on Galveston Street, the high school department was discontinued. The grammar school continued in the same location until 1946. It was then condemned for school purposes, and during the year 1946-47 the school classes were conducted in the Harding School building. In 1947 a new parochial

⁸ Sister Mary Gabriel, *Catholic Churches and Schools of Laredo*, a scrapbook with pictures and translations of old documents, Ursuline Academy Library.

school was completed and dedicated as a memorial to the parishioners, living and dead, who served in World War II.⁹

The Laredo Seminary, now called Holding Institute, was founded by Miss Toland in the fall of 1882. A four-room building was built on a block of land donated by Elias Robertson. This is a Methodist school. Holding Institute is located in the southwestern part of town, at the bend of the river, where the land is so low that whenever the river is on a rise everyone has to move out.¹⁰ The school has grown until it includes within its boundary lines seven blocks of land, or an area of over fourteen acres, upon which are situated seven buildings with seventy rooms. In 1886 it was opened to boys. The school now has an enrollment of six hundred pupils, many of whom are from various parts of Mexico.¹¹

⁹ Saint Peter's Jubilee Anniversary souvenir program, p. 7.

¹⁰ Nancy Holding, *A Decade of Mission Life*, Holding Institute Library, pp. 1-19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

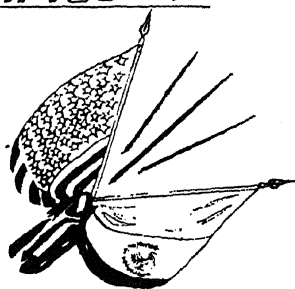
Chapter Eight

Festivals, Celebrations, Monuments, Places of Interest

International

BORDER

OLYMPICS



LAREDO

TEXAS

1940

LAREDO has more than its share of Indian and Mexican festivals, which are given each year, and these have done much to preserve folk customs. They also attract tourists.

"*Los Pastores*" is a nativity drama which the lower class of Mexicans perform every Christmas, usually in the open air. Evidences indicate that *Los Pastores* was brought to Mexico by the Franciscan monks and the Jesuits who accompanied Cortez, that it was later banished from the church, and that since then it has been handed down by manuscript or word of mouth through generations of pious peasants to their descendants of today, who present it after something of the manner in which our ancestors presented their Shepherd Plays and others of the Christmas cycle. *Los Pastores* was used in the New World as a substitute for the pagan rituals, dances and festivals of the Indians. The humble unlettered folk of Laredo have clung to the *Pastores*, and the only important change is the substitution of native music. The characters were: the Angel, Michael, the Hermit, and seven Devils — Lucifer, Zatanetz, Bercuvut, Aztucia, Azmodeo, Barrabas, and Pecado. There were twelve Shepherds. This is strictly a Shepherd's Play and begins with a song from the Shepherds, who are herding their flocks and talking. An Angel appears and addresses himself to Parrado. The Shepherd asks if he is a messenger from His Majesty. Michael says:

Yes from Heaven I am sent
To bring you tidings of the birth of the God child —
Go, Parrado, if you will, and notify the shepherds.
Tell them that the child now born,
Giving light to the darkness and to the sun and moon also
Is within the gate of Bethlehem near a field of flowers
With Joseph and Mary —
And this supreme King of Heaven with love pure and true
Is born thus humble from Sin to free you.

He then tells Parrado to see each Shepherd and a certain Hermit and tell them to journey together to this happy place. The Pastor carries out his mission, and his companions receive his news with great rejoicing.

After each has expressed his delight, they join in a song singing:

Brothers all – Happy and gay!
We sing of the Glory of This happy day.

Then the *Pastores* tell of those who are to join in the festival. Among them are David, Gabriel, Raphael, several New Testament characters and even some modern Saints. After this, Tebano speaks briefly of the journey of the Holy Family to Bethlehem and of their failure to obtain lodging there. The chorus answers "No, no," and an angel chorus sings that all is well, that they will be guided to the newborn child. Parrado expresses his joy and delivers a long passage of praise to the Virgin and Child, which is continued by Tebano. All the party proceed to follow the star, singing as they march.

As the song ends and the Shepherds pass out, Lucifer enters and tells of his fall from heaven and of the temptation of Eve; but the merciful God has promised to send his absolution to mankind in the second person of the Trinity, who to mortals will bring love and consolation. Lucifer is ready to search for the Child and to kill him.

The Shepherds approach again and Lucifer hides. Each man speaks of treasures he would like to place in the "great Church" and all this infuriates Lucifer, who remains hiding while the Shepherds are in sight.

Then other voices come through the air, and as the chant ends, Michael, disguised as a shepherd, tells of the happy marriage of Mary and Joseph. A stormy dialogue follows between him and Lucifer. Michael then leaves with the Shepherds. Five other Devils enter to do homage to Lucifer and to raise his spirits. When the *Pastores* appear again, they have struck camp and have scattered to look after the sheep and bring wood and water. Here the Hermit appears and kneels in prayer. Lucifer interrupts the prayer and denounces the Hermit. At this time the Angel appears and the song tells of the great mystery. Lucifer and Michael have words. The two spirits recall their former battle in Heaven and

the Angel tells the Demon that today he will conquer him for the second time. Lucifer argues the question, but Michael binds him in chains. The Shepherds march on, talking and singing the glory of the Mother and Child. Tebano gave the first adoration to the Child. Each approaches with a song, then kneels in prayer and gifts are laid in the manger. The *Pastores* sing:

In a bed of straw I see them
Human word divine
Thou sweet child with cold art trembling
To free these sins of mine.

Now has come to the eternal father
Now has come eternal light,
Mary's child has come to bless us
Jesus is the name of might.

After these songs it is time for the Shepherds to leave. Parrado speaks the farewell:

And now we must depart.
Dear Mary Thou
And Joseph too
Bless us with all your heart.

Then the pilgrims march out singing:

Farewell, happy manger
Farewell Jesus true.
Now we go *pastores*
To the year that is new.¹

Christmas decorations — tinfoil, tinsel, spangles, ribbon, and crepe paper are used to decorate the red and black costumes of the Devils, who wear long capes and masks. Lucifer carries torpedoes in his pocket, which explode while the Hermit is arguing with him. The Shepherds have less elaborate costumes, and they carry long staffs with boxes at one end instead of crooks. These boxes are made to look like lanterns. The Hermit, who is dressed in a long white robe, always carries a queer looking crucifix made of spools, hung around

¹ *Los Pastores*, an unpublished thesis of Miss Katherine Tarver.

the neck on a heavy cord. The spools show that he is a comic character, although the crucifix shows that he is a holy man. The Angel is a child, dressed in white, with wings and a sword with which to fight off the Devil.

The music of the *Pastores* is queer. The singers sing without accompaniment of any kind, and they keep the pitch remarkably well. The form follows no set pattern, but during the singing the Shepherds beat out an effective rhythm on the ground with the end of their crooks. This weird music can be heard from afar.²

Every year from December 23 to January 6 *Los Pastores* are held in Laredo. They are held in out-of-the-way places, such as in the *arroyos* (creek bottoms). These people take this pageant seriously, and do not want to be laughed at or made fun of by Americans. If one can find where these *fiestas* are being held, and if one shows that he is really interested in them, the Mexicans will invite him to see the whole pageant and enter into the merriment afterwards.

Another Mexican festival is that of the *Matachines*. The originator of the *fiesta* in this section of the country is an old miner whose name is José Olivares. In 1906 he came to Dolores from Mexico. He said he saw the need of this religious observance, so he went back to the Indians in Zacatecas, Mexico, to study the many dances, and spent six months there learning over forty of them. Every year, on the third of May, the *fiesta* is held in Laredo, along the high bluff of the Rio Grande, on the corner of Sánchez and Anna streets. The public is invited to attend. Only men and boys take part, but the women and children sit on benches around the circle where the dances are held. This *fiesta* takes place under a crudely made arbor, at the end of which is an altar topped with a large cross. The cross is entirely decorated with colored paper flowers. The place is lighted by night with old lanterns hung about the arbor.

Costumes are crudely made but are picturesque. They consist of red shirts and skirts, and hanging on these skirts are rows of dried reed (from the river

² *Ibid.*

bank). They are placed on the skirts so as to look like fringe, and on the bottom of each reed there are bells, or tops from soda water bottles hammered down so hard as to make a perfect rhythm with each dance step. One man in the dance depicts the tribe of the Matachines and wears the face of a goat mask. Each dancer carries a bow and arrow, and the dance steps are most strenuous. Music of one stanza only is played by a drummer and two violinists, and the music is in regular tom-tom form. Each dance lasts about fifteen minutes, and there are intervals of rest during which the women sing hymns and pray.

This is the way the Indians show their veneration of the cross, and the morning after the dance, the tribe of the dancers go to their little church on their hands and knees, carrying the cross. Here they attend services and then return to their arbor dancing.³

Another religious festival is that of All Souls' Day. It is the custom of Latin Americans to go to the cemetery early in the morning, usually before the sun rises, and spend the day with their dead. Encircling the Catholic Cemetery are crudely built stands where fruit, cold drinks, *raspa*, *tacos*, *enchiladas*, and *tamales* are sold. Each family takes its own water jug, chairs, and sometimes lunch, and people have a merry time visiting their friends whom they have not seen in a long time. The priest goes from grave to grave, sprinkling holy water and blessing each one, and with each family he offers prayers for the deceased. By seven in the evening the little cemetery looks like a veritable flower garden.

Still another festival takes place on February 2. This is the day of Candlemas or Candelario, and commemorates the day when Mary took the Infant Jesus to the Temple. It is the day devoted to the care of the flowers and seeds. In every little patio on Candlemas Day, pots are filled with fresh earth and seeds are planted. Bulbs of lilies, especially the red lilies that actually bloom on Good Friday, are set in pots, lard cans, boxes, or whatever is at hand. Ferns are changed to new pots, and pieces of jasmine are planted.

³ José Olivares to Kathleen DaCamara, May 3, 1942.

Corpus Christi Day is another church festival. On this Sunday there is always a procession of Catholics for several blocks in the vicinity of San Agustín Church. Altars are built at various places and these are beautifully decorated with flowers of all kinds. The procession moves from one holy shrine to another worshipping Christ, our Lord.

There are many other festivals that are not of a religious nature. One is the *Piñata*. The *piñata* is a piece of pottery that is covered with crepe paper, and made in various formations, depicting a boat, turkey, Santa Claus, or anything else symbolic of the season. The *piñata* is used at children's parties and is usually filled with candies, balloons, peanuts, chewing gum or favors. Each child has a chance to break it by hitting it with a stick when he is blindfolded.

At Easter time the Mexicans make *cascarones*. A *cascarón* is an eggshell filled with confetti and used instead of candy eggs on Easter Sunday. The people begin saving their eggshells at the beginning of Lent. Each time they use an egg they break the top of it about the size of a quarter. After the contents have been removed, the shell is washed and stored away. Then during the last of Holy Week all of the children make their *cascarones*. Using old pieces of crepe paper for dye, they dip the eggs and make them many different colors. After the egg is dried, they fill it with confetti and paste a top, made of tissue paper, over the hole. Sometimes they even make caricatures on the eggs.

Laredo is one of the few cities in the United States honoring the Father of our Country with a three-day celebration on the anniversary of his birthday. In 1898 the Improved Order of Redmen initiated this annual event as a means of paying homage to George Washington. Down through the years the event has inspired in the people of our borderland patriotism, love of country, cordiality, and friendship toward our sister republic to the South. Both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo join hands in observing the events and spectacles presented each year. Both cities take on a carnival atmosphere during the celebration. Buildings are bedecked with flags and gay buntings of every description, and

strings of varied colored lights are strung across the intersections in the business district. Much of the original celebration is reenacted each year. Among some of the features is the reception which takes place at the International Bridge the morning of the 22nd of February. Another old feature is the attack on the City Hall by Indians, and the presentation of the keys of the city to Pocahontas, who is portrayed yearly by some Laredo girl. The Indian attack represents a saga from the history of Laredo, when early settlers were constantly harassed by Indians, and their homes burned and families slaughtered.⁴

Among the most important events staged in Laredo for winter tourists is the International Border Olympics, staged annually since 1933. It is recognized as one of the outstanding track meets, bringing stars of international fame and reputation. The original idea was conceived by Amado Cavazos and Felipe Moreno. They met with Superintendent Galligan, Coach Shirley DaCamara, and J. W. Nixon, and it was decided to make it an annual affair and to hold it at the high school field.

The Olympics has received great publicity because it constitutes the first important outdoor track meet of the season each year. The Border Olympics has now been incorporated and there are about fifty underwriters for the organization each year, but the directors have no trouble in getting them.

There are several monuments in Laredo of which its citizens are proud. The Pan-American marker is a tablet at the center of the International Bridge. It was erected and dedicated April, 1935, at an impressive ceremony on the bridge, conducted by the Pan-American Round Table. It bears the colors of all the flags of the countries of the Americas.

A historical monument was provided Laredo by the historical division of the Texas Centennial Organization at a cost of one thousand dollars. The monument is on the Laredo-San Antonio Highway, about three miles out of Laredo.

⁴ Seb Wilcox, *Washington Birthday Official Program*, 1937.

The Texas Historical Commission placed a monument on San Agustín Plaza commemorating Tomás Sánchez and the few families who founded Laredo. It is a red polished granite marker about ten feet high and three feet wide.

The First Infantry, New Hampshire National Guard, presented a bronze tablet to Laredo in August, 1941. It was placed on the north face of the municipal bandstand on Jarvis Plaza. This was given to Laredo in appreciation of the warm spirit of hospitality displayed by the citizens while these men were stationed in the city.

There is a monument which is located at the entrance to the Country Club, which was erected in honor of "Deaf" Smith. The marker was erected by the Daughters of the Texas Revolution.

On Jarvis Plaza facing the postoffice, the Lucy Merriweather Chapter of the D. A. R. have placed a memorial monument to all those Laredo boys who lost their lives during the First World War. The names of all the men are inscribed on the marker.

A memorial marker was erected to the late Shirley DaCamara, who was coach at the Martin High School for ten years. The high school field was named after him, and the marker is at the entrance to the field. A beautiful arch with the inscription "Shirley Field" was also secured and is appropriately lighted when the field is used. The memorial stadium was dedicated by the Lions Club, of which Shirley was a member.

San Agustín Plaza is of historical interest. It was the center of the original site of the Villa de San Agustín de Laredo. There is an old bell in the tower that dates back to the late 1700's. In 1790 San Agustín Plaza was the scene of an Indian war dance, when the Lipan Indians attacked the town. In the center of the plaza in the early days was the whipping post, where the offenders were punished with the lash or placed in the stocks for wrongdoing.

Jarvis Plaza is also a point of interest. The plaza has the usual bandstand in the center, around which the promenade, an old Mexican custom, prevails. Around the circular walks, on Thursday and Sunday

evenings, from eight to ten, the young men and girls stroll in opposite directions. Eyeing all girls as he passes, the boy will choose his favorite and nod. If he is favorably received, the couple will leave the promenade together. That many people gather to watch does not seem to bother the young people.

The United States Border Patrol Quarters was located at the corner of Poggenpohl Street and Santa Rita Avenue. It is a stucco building, with log railings about the porch, and an unusual type of interior decoration in the arrangement of broken pieces of chinaware and glasses of various colors. The artistic work was done by Mexican labor. Doors and windows are framed in the peculiar mosaic, and a canopy is created over the main doorway. Wall paintings of the gleaming material adorn the rooms, and weird, but lifelike, reproductions of plants and animals are scattered everywhere.

The Laredo Country Club is sponsored by the Laredo Junior Chamber of Commerce. The grounds and buildings were leased from the city. The clubhouse is a stucco building with a large tile pavilion in front. There are several tennis courts, a nine-hole golf course, and a swimming pool.

A large earthen dam is under construction just northeast of the Country Club. When it is completed, it will furnish the city beautiful picnic grounds, and facilities for boating, fishing, and swimming. It will attract many tourists and will be a recreational center for the citizens of Laredo.

The municipal swimming pool is located at the airport. This pool was built by the United States Government when the gunnery school was situated here. It was built of the finest materials and is a source of pride to the people of Laredo.

Laredo has many beautiful homes. Some of these are old homes situated along the bluffs of the Rio Grande. Others are of the newest type of architecture. One interested in the old homes, walls, and gardens can drive along Zaragoza Avenue from the International Bridge east. There are adobe walls that date back to the early 1800's, and one will find trees and plants that are rare to Laredo. In the northeastern part of the city,

called the Heights, one will find new ranch style, colonial, Monterrey and other modern homes. A visit to some of the beautiful gardens of Laredo will make one realize that almost any plant will grow here. A. R. Hunt has a camellia garden that can equal any in the South. Mrs. Jones' cactus garden is known throughout the United States. She ships cactus to points all over the world. Other gardens of interest are those of Mr. Hachar, of the Laredo Water Plant, and of Mrs. Candlin.

Another place of interest to visit is Gordon Shiner's Musuem in the northern part of the city. He has a wonderful collection of arrowheads, petrified wood, and fans.

Conclusion

THE TITLE "Gateway to Mexico" has been Laredo's natural claim for nearly two hundred years. It is here that hundreds of thousands enter and leave Mexico each year. Soon this title will be able to embrace the gateway to Central America and South America.

Laredo's advantages of its location, climate, inexhaustible supply of oil, gas, and water, cheap labor, and rich lands have helped in the development and growth of the city that was destined to become a heap of ruins according to many travelers of the early days.

Fertility of soil makes both dry and irrigated farming exceedingly profitable. With an already broad and varied business foundation, it offers a fertile field for investments of many types, while its vast trade territory and tremendously increasing tourist traffic means a growth of enormous proportions.

There is an old saying that once one has tasted the waters of the Rio Grande, his steps will bring him back. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why so many tourists have returned to make Laredo their home. Be that as it may, Laredo is going forward.

Bibliography

I. BOOKS

Bancroft, H. H., *History of Mexico*, Bancroft Press, New York.

This book gives a good background in the exploration and colonization of New Spain.

Barker, E. C., *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*, Cokesbury Press, Dallas, Texas, 1925.

Bolton, H. E., *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1915, Vol. III.

It is a standard history on Texas colonization.

Brown, John Henry, *History of Texas*, Vol. II.

Contains many of the skirmishes between the Mexican forces and the Texans along the Rio Grande border.

Castañeda, Carlos, *Our Catholic Heritage*, Knights of Columbus Commission, University of Texas.

This book is thorough on the Texas Mission Period.

Evans, A. A., *Confederate Military History*.

Tells of the trouble along the Rio Grande during the Civil War.

Gammel, H. P. N., Editor, *Gammel's Laws of Texas*, Vol. III, Gammel's Book Store, Publisher, Austin, Texas, 1921.

Contains the bill incorporating the city of Laredo.

Heusinger, E. W., *Early Exploration and Mission Establishments in Texas*.

A short article on the founding of Laredo.

Hill, Lawrence Francis, *José de Escandón and the Founding of Nuevo Santander*, Ohio State University Press.

A very good history of the colonies founded by Escandón.

Holding, Nancy, *A Decade of Mission Life*, Methodist Publishing Company, Nashville, Tennessee, 1895.

The founding of Holding Institute.

Jennings, N. A., *A Texas Ranger*, Southwest Press, Dallas, Texas.

A good description of the country along the border.

Johnson-Barker, *Texas and Texans*, An Encyclopedia.

Concise articles on cities, counties, and famous personages in Texas.

Lamar, *Papers of Mirabeau B.*, Vols. IV and VI, Originals in Texas University Library.

La Pitahaya, Martin High School Year Book, 1927.

The theme of this year book was the founding of Laredo.

Lewis Publishing Company, *History of Southwest Texas*, 1917.

McCampbell, Coleman, *Saga of a Frontier Seaport*, Southwest Press, Dallas, Texas, 1934.

This has the history of the Texas-Mexican Railroad.

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Vol. XVII.

Pierce, Frank C., *A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, George Banta Publishing Company, Menasha, Wisconsin, 1917.

Scott, Florence Johnson, *Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande*, Naylor Company, San Antonio, 1937.

This contains the original land grants of Laredo.

Soliz, Father, *Father Soliz Diary*, Knights of Columbus Historical Commission Pamphlet.

His travels from Laredo to Dolores and to San Antonio. Good description of the country.

Texas Almanac of 1850 and 1942.

Texas Development Bureau, *New Encyclopedia of Texas*.

War of the Rebellion Records, Series I, Vol. 34.

This is a series of 12 volumes on the Civil War.

II. NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Ashley, George, "Dolores Coal Mines," *United States Geological Survey Bulletin*, Number 691.

- "Bermuda Onion Culture in Texas," *Circular No. 56*, November, 1932, Division of Horticulture, A & M College.
- Blanton, Burt, "Industrial and Economic Survey of the City of Laredo," July 1, 1928, prepared for the Central Power and Light Co.
- International Border Olympics Official Program*, Laredo, 1940.
- Climatic Summary, Section 31, Southwest Texas*, United States Dept. of Agriculture, Weather Bureau.
- Directory of Texas Manufacturers*, Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, 1941.
- Falvella, James, "The Founding of Laredo," 1921, a pamphlet.
- Laredo *Times*, Advertisements, July 14, 1886; "Church History," September 30, 1934; "Education in Laredo," April 25, 1937; "History of the *Times*," August 10, 1941; "History of Laredo," November 23, 1937; "Journey from San Antonio to Laredo in 1843," October 17, 1937; "Mier Expedition," December 19, 1935; "*Los Pastores*," November 30, 1941.
- San Antonio *Express*, April 9, 1886.
- Seb Wilcox, "Fort McIntosh," *Epic-Century*, September, 1938, Naylor Company, San Antonio, Texas.
- Historical Records Survey.
- Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, "A Trip to Texas in 1828," Vol. XXIX; Bolton's Translation of "Tiempo De Cuervo's Ynspeccion de San Agustín de Laredo," Vol. VI; "Laredo City Election and Riot of 1886," Vol. XIV; "Inspection of Texas Posts"; "Laredo During the Texas Republic," Vol. XLII; "182 Years of Progress in Laredo," April 30, 1937.

III. UNPUBLISHED ARTICLES AND THESES

- Bennett, Miss Katherine, "History of Education in Laredo," an unpublished thesis, Texas University.
- Burnell, James, Auditor of the Missouri Pacific Railroad at Palestine, Texas, letter to Kathleen DaCamara, July, 1942.
- Department of Commerce, Maps showing the annual precipitation, etc.

Gabriel, Sister Mary, "Scrapbook on the Founding of Laredo, History of the Sisters of Mercy, and the Ursuline Convent."

Laredo "Archives (Unbound)", Funeral notice of the Botas Party, 1886; Letter of Vicente Fillisola to Justice of the Peace of Laredo, dated 1838; Letter of José Ossorio, dated 1768; Census Report of December, 1828; Report of Miguel Ponce Borrego, 1789.

Natalie, Sister Mary, "History of San Agustín Church in Laredo," an unpublished thesis, Texas University.

Naturalization Records in the United States District Clerk's office.

Pérez, Ricardo, An Industrial Survey of Laredo, prepared for the Laredo Chamber of Commerce.

Tarver, Miss Katherine, "Los Pastores," An unpublished thesis, Georgetown University.

Texas Historical Guide, Webb County Files, Smith-Young Tower, San Antonio.

Wilcox, Seb, "Laredo Under Spain," an unpublished type-written article, Martin High School Library.

IV. INTERVIEWS

Botello, F. P., Chairman of the Tire Rationing Board, Laredo, Texas.

Briscoe, Payne, President of the Laredo National Bank, Laredo, Texas.

Burr, Minnie, Recorder for the Baptist Church, Laredo, Texas.

Cook, Mrs. C. W., wife of the late C. W. Cook, Rector of Christ Church Episcopal, Laredo, Texas.

Farias, G. P., Tax Collector, Laredo, Texas.

Gabriel, Sister Mary, Sister at the Ursuline Convent, Laredo, Texas.

Gallagher, Dave, Chief of Police, Laredo, Texas.

Galligan, W. P., Superintendent of Laredo Public Schools, Laredo, Texas.

García, A. R., City Secretary, Laredo, Texas.

Goodman, Mrs. Jennie, Postmistress of Laredo, Texas.

Hill, Mrs. E., Recorder of the Christian Science Church,
Laredo, Texas.

Ladabaum, Mrs. J., Member of the Orthodox Jewish Church,
Laredo, Texas.

Lattig, Mr. Frank, City Tax Assessor, Laredo, Texas.

Leyendecker, Edward, in charge of the sale of war bonds and
stamps in Laredo, Texas.

May, Marjorie, Chief Clerk at the Bell Telephone Co., La-
redo, Texas.

Mims, Mrs. W., Charter Member of the Methodist Church,
Laredo, Texas.

Nixon, J. W., Principal of Martin High School, Laredo,
Texas.

Olivares, José, Originator of the Matachines in Laredo,
Texas.

Pena, E., Fire Marshal, Laredo, Texas.

Phillips, Mrs. H. A., Member of the Presbyterian Church,
Laredo, Texas.

Pierce, L. A., Webb County Agricultural Agent, Laredo,
Texas.

Renkin, G. F., Fire Chief of Laredo, Texas.

Snow, C. D., Assistant Manager of Texas Harvest Hat Com-
pany, Laredo, Texas.

Stanford, P., Vice President of the Union National Bank,
Laredo, Texas.

Steuber, Reverend Phillip, Pastor of San Agustin Church,
Laredo, Texas.

Sturgis, George, Head of the Local Draft Board, Laredo,
Texas.

Torchin, L. A., Member of the Reformed Jewish Church,
Laredo, Texas.

Wine, Chester, Manager of the Central Power and Light
Company, Laredo, Texas.

Appendix

TABLE I

Population

1755	25	1845	1885
	(persons)	1850	1879
1757	85	1870	2046
1767	120	1880	3531
1778	200	1890	11,319
1789	700	1900	13,429
	(and 110 Indians)	1910	14,855
1819	1418	1920	22,710
1828	2052	1930	32,618
1831	1698	1940	39,274
1835	1750	1942	45,498
(because of the depredations of the Indians)			

TABLE II
Inhabitants Composing This Settlement

Families		Persons	Horse Stock	Mules	Yokes	Sheep & Goats	CATTLE
1	Capt. Sánchez married Catarina Uribe, 9 children, 70 horses, 10 he asses, she asses, all arms, 7 servants, one married, has 1 daughter	20	500	125	2	2000	50
1	Don Juan García Saldivar, married Catarina de las Casas, all arms, 5 horses, 2 servants	4				250	
1	Don Prudencio García married Josepha Sánchez, 5 children, all arms, 10 horses	7				740	
1	Don J. L. Treviño, married A. Moreno, 6 children, all arms, 12 horses	8	60			700	10
1	J. F. García, married M. Ritas, 7 children, all arms, 6 horses	9	25			600	
1	J. B. Sánchez, married F. Rodríguez, 10 children, all arms, 2 horses	12				500	4
1	A. Sánchez, married J. Díaz, 2 children, all arms, 2 horses	4				700	
1	L. Sánchez, single, all arms, 10 horses, 1 he ass, 1 servant	2	27			500	
1	J. F. Flores, married, 3 children, all arms, 15 horses, 2 he asses	5	30			740	
1	J. Díaz & mother, all arms, 6 horses	2				730	92
1	J. Ramón, married, 2 children, all arms, 6 horses, 3 he asses	4	30			200	
1	Leonardo García, single, all arms, 4 horses	1	25			400	
1	J. Salinas, married Isabel Treviño, 1 child, all arms, 8 horses	3	15			400	3
1	Pedro Salinas, single, has his mother, and 1 sister, all arms, 8 horses	3				200	
1	Juan Diego, single, all arms, 4 horses	1	12				4

TABLE III

Original Grantees of Laredo Porciones

Porcion No. — Name of Grantee

1	José Antonio Flores
2	Javier Pena
3	José Jesús Pena
4	Miguel Martínez
5	Nicolás De La Garza
6	Tomás De Cuellar
7	Unassigned
8	Unassigned
9	Unassigned
10	Unassigned
11	Unassigned
12	Unassigned
13	Pedro García
14	Salvador Hidalgo
15	Joaquín Cavazos
16	Blas de J. Sánchez
17	Unassigned
18	Unassigned
19	Unassigned
20	Unassigned
21	Unassigned
22	Unassigned
23	Unassigned
24	Unassigned
25	José Tomás De Cuellar
26	José De Soto Mayor
27	Antonio López
28	Nicolás Campos
29	Joaquín Gutiérrez
30	Francisco Xavier Uribe
31	Juan Guerra
32	Blas Treviño
33	Gervacio Badillos
34	Francisca Oribe
35	Juan Francisco Oribe
36	Juan Diego Treviño
37	Carlos Mendiola
38	Juan Mendiola
39	Juan E. Vásquez
40	Martin Morales
41	José Antonio Martínez
42	Marcos Mendiola
43	Pedro Mendiola
44	Unassigned
45	Unassigned
46	Unassigned

Porcion No. — Name of Grantee

47	Unassigned
48	Unassigned
49	Unassigned
50	Unassigned
51	Unassigned
52	Unassigned
53	Tomás Sánchez (Jr.)
54	Tomás Sánchez (Jr.)
55	Santiago Sánchez
56	Miguel García
57	José Guarjado
58	José P. García
59	Domingo García
60	José Cristóbal García
61	José De Bustamente
62	Joaquín García
63	Juan Baptista García
64	Leonardo García
65	Maria De Jesus Sánchez
66	Leonardo Sánchez
67	Toribio Rodríguez
68	Juan Francisco García
69	Agustín Sánchez
70	Maria Gertrudis Sánchez
71	Eugenio Martínez
72	Juan B. Villareal
73	José F. Cordova
74	José Treviño
75	Antonio Treviño
76	José Dionisio Treviño
77	José Antonio Díaz
78	José Miguel Díaz
79	Lauriano Salinas
80	José Batolo Chapa
81	Tadeo Sánchez
82	Antonio Nasario
83	Manuel García
84	Eugenio Rodríguez
85	Eugenio Sánchez
86	José Cayetano de la Garza
87	José Manuel Albino Martínez
88	Tomás Uribe
89	Tracts, four leagues square. Unassigned.

TABLE IV
Building Permits

1934	\$ 17,430	1938	\$ 64,180
1935	\$ 45,845	1939	\$ 79,332
1936	\$137,390	1940	\$ 60,520
1937	\$ 99,756	1941	\$189,285

TABLE V
Annual Retail Trade — 1941

Stores	477	Employers	1,411
Sales	\$9,609,000		

Wholesale Trade

Establishments	47	Total payroll	\$268,000
Sales	\$5,587,000		

Service Establishments

Establishments	126	Employers	149
Receipts	\$262,000	Payroll	\$77,000

TABLE VI
Carlot Shipments of Vegetables from Laredo

Season July 1 — June 30	Onions	Tomatoes	Other Vegetables	Total
1940-41	1,284	111	453	1,848
1941-42	2,040	281	403	2,724
1942-43	1,243	318	574	2,135
1943-44	1,271	240	470	1,981
1944-45	1,269	236	376	1,881
1945-46	2,107	296	255	2,658
1946-47	1,698	725	475	2,898

TABLE VII

Total No. of Motor Vehicles Passing through Port of Laredo	1946	575,355
Manufactured and Processed Industries in Laredo	1946	\$7,797,000
Annual Retail Trade in Laredo	1946	\$17,989,000
Annual Wholesale Trade in Laredo	1946	\$34,792,000
Total Freight from Mexico through Laredo	1946	10,854 Carloads
Total Freight to Mexico through Laredo	1946	18,216 "
Total Exports — Air, Rail and Truck from Laredo	1946	\$148,825,245
Amt. Cash, Exchange and Bonds in Laredo Banks	1946	\$20,529,378
Purchasing Power in Laredo	1948	\$44,000,000

**The following firms and individuals
have made it possible for me to pub-
lish this book. To each of them a
million thanks.**

On Your Way to Mexico . . .

Let Humble Touring Service help you prepare your Mexico Entry Papers. Stop in Laredo for these *free* services.



TOURING SERVICE LAREDO BRANCH

San Bernardo & Matamoros Sts.
(U. S. Highways 59 & 81)

- Preliminary papers for your tourist cards and auto permits, to save you time at the Border immigration station
- Money Exchange
- Current highway information and ideas for alternate routes
- Customs and immigration regulations
- Maps and travel folders for your trip . . . and in addition
- At reasonable rates, automobile insurance for *coverage in Mexico*

Humble Touring Service is another Humble service rendered to travelers by car. Get a Touring Service request card at any Humble sign, or write direct to Humble Touring Service, Houston, for free road maps clearly marked to any point in the United States, Canada or Mexico.

HUMBLE OIL & REFINING COMPANY

Compliments of

TEX PATA

Pipe Line Company

Since 1889

City Lumber Company

PETER P. LEYENDECKER

Compliments

of the

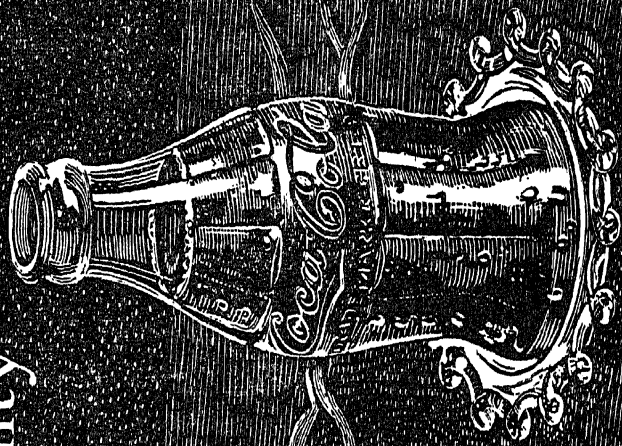
Leyendeckers'

127

PHONES

128

Continuous Quality



© 1946 The C C Co



BOTTLED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE COCA-COLA COMPANY BY

S. N. JOHNSON

Compliments of

A & B PONTIAC
GATEWAY CHEVROLET
GUAJARDO MOTOR CO.
EWING NASH MOTORS
JACK GUERRA MOTORS
LAREDO MOTOR CO., INC.
LYONS-PEICKERT MOTORS
MOSER AUTO CO.
PAN AMERICAN MOTOR CO.
RAMIREZ MOTOR CO.
SAMES MOTOR CO.
WALSH MOTOR CO.

Representing

PONTIAC — CHEVROLET — DODGE
PLYMOUTH — NASH — CHRYSLER
DE SOTO — CADILLAC — OLDSMOBILE
STUDEBAKER — LINCOLN — MERCURY
BUICK — FORD — HUDSON — PACKARD

**Laredo Automotive Dealers
Association**

Compliments of

Reyna Florist

Smart Flower Styling

Flowers by Wire

515 Matamoros

Phone 1642

Laredo Lumber and Supply Company

200 Market

Phone 3010

J. E. FOSTER, MGR.

Compliments
of
Herring Price Lumber Co.

W. B. HEANER

CONSIGNEE

MAGNOLIA CO.

CASSO GUERRA

WHOLESALE GROCERS

Compliments

of

H. B. Zachry

General Contractors

Laredo

San Antonio

Established in 1917

T. GUTIERREZ

A. GUTIERREZ

Teodosio Gutierrez & Co.

Wholesale Grocers — Grain Dealers

Coffee Roasters

Importers and Exporters

Phone L. D. No. 15

P. O. Box 703

Compliments

of

Ward Insurance Agency

ALL FORMS OF INSURANCE

Phone 1410

Sames Moore Bldg.

Best Wishes

Jack Guerra Motors

Cadillac — Oldsmobile — G.M.C. Trucks

**Texas Mining and Smelting Division
of National Lead Co.**

Makers of Antimony and Antimony Oxide

Office at

LAREDO, TEXAS

Compliments

of

Guajardo Motor Co.

PLYMOUTH

DODGE

Court Cortez and Cafe

“Mi Casa es Suya”

Laredo, Texas

Highway 81 & 83

Compliments of

Louis Kowalski and Son

Distributors of Texaco Petroleum Products

and

Firestone Tires, Batteries, and Accessories

Locker Ice and Storage

PORTER S. GARNER

319 Guadalupe

Tel. 1144

Compliments
of
Laredo Transportation Co.

1889

1949

James Moore & Co.

Established in 1893

Wholesale Grocers, Fruits, and Produce

Importers

Exporters

David M. Slaughter

DAVID SLAUGHTER
and SON Laredo, Texas

Garcia Typewriter Co.

Business Machines
and
Office Furniture

Tel. 2422

Your *GE* Appliance
Dealer

Koenig Electric Co.

1910 San Bernardo Ave.
Laredo, Texas

Ellis & Ellis

Insure

In Sure

Insurance

1211 Matamoros St. Phone 96

HUGH YATES

Petroleum Products

Diesel Fuel — Fuel Oil

Gasolines — Kerosenes

Greases

Phone 773

JOE BRAND

Laredo, Texas

COUNTESS MARA TIES

ARROW SHIRTS

DOBBS HATS

HICKEY-FREEMAN CLOTHES

BOTANY 500 CLOTHES

HOLLYWOOD CLOTHES

The R. V. Dublin Company

Growers and Shippers

Fruits and Vegetables

LAREDO, TEXAS

Congratulations

Stowers Furniture Company

Compliments

of

Laredo Steam Laundry

Compliments
of
County of Webb

M. J. RAYMOND, County Judge

S. N. JOHNSON, Commissioner Precinct I

T. A. LEYENDECKER, Commissioner Precinct II

R. E. MISENER, Commissioner Precinct III

CARLOS PALACIOS, Commissioner Precinct IV

Best Wishes
from

The Texas Mexican Railway Company

GENERAL OFFICE

at

“Laredo on the Rio Grande”

Compliments

K P A B

MUTUAL BROADCASTING SYSTEM

1490 on your dial

Studios in the Hamilton Hotel

George O. Jackson Insurance

All Forms of Insurance and Bonds

1104 Houston

Phone 2812

"Goodbye Anxiety"

Holiday House

506 SALINAS AVE.

YOUR

TOY —

BOOK —

HOBBY

CENTER

Kathleen Da Camara

Mary Cook

Kansas City Public Library



Presented to the Library by

Mrs. Clyde H. Porter

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY



124 340

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY